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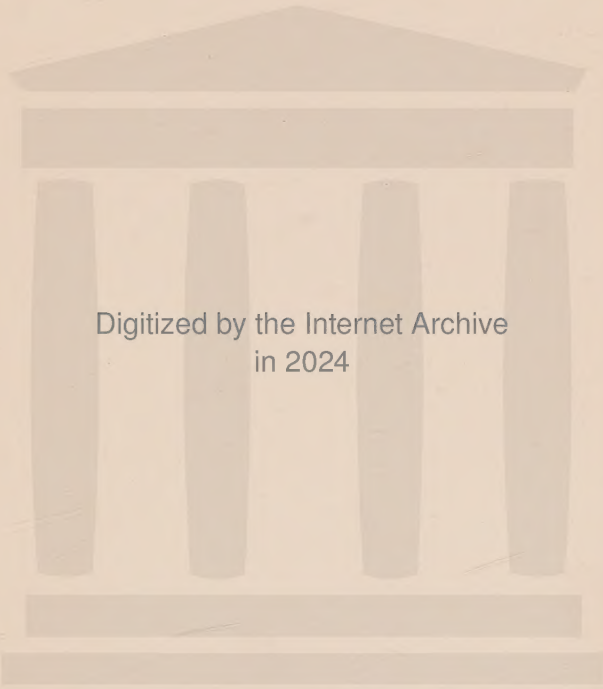
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Great Savors of the World

VOL. I.

BY

SWÂMI ABHEDÂNANDA

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"India and Her People," "How to Be a Yogi," etc.*



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DEDICATED
TO THE
LOTUS FEET
OF THE
GREAT SAVIORS OF ALL NATIONS.

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"O Lord! As rivers rising from different mountains run crooked or straight toward one ocean, so all special religions, rising from various standpoints, run crooked or straight toward Thee—the Infinite Ocean of Existence, Intelligence, Bliss and Love."

Preface

THIS volume contains four of the series of lectures delivered before the "Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences," as also before the Vedanta Society of New York.

The Word "Savior" has been used here in its broad and universal sense, which should not be confounded with the orthodox Christian conception of a Savior who saves sinners from eternal perdition.

The short sketches of the lives of these saviors which are given here are based upon authentic historical accounts gathered by different scholars from various sources.

The second and third volumes will contain the lives and teachings of Buddha, Christ, Mahomet and Râmakrishna.

The principal aim of these lectures has been to show that the fundamental teachings of the founders of the great religions of the world have had the same spiritual keynote and that

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the stories connected with their lives and miraculous deeds are similar to those of Jesus the Christ. Furthermore, it has been my object to show that the universal religion of Vedanta embraces the teachings of all the Saviors of the world and that it establishes harmony among all sectarian religions.

May the reader outgrow the narrow limitations of his creeds, doctrines and dogmas and see through the light of Vedanta the grandeur of the "Unity of Godhead under variety of names and forms," and reach the ultimate goal of Absolute Oneness with Brahman, the Infinite Spirit. This is the earnest prayer of

THE AUTHOR.

VEDANTA ASHRAMA,

West Cornwall, Conn., Aug. 18, 1911.

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INTRODUCTORY.

Great Saviors of the World

THE seers of Truth in ancient India, inspired by spiritual vision, realized the Almighty Lord of the universe, and at least two thousand years before Christ declared, "That which exists is One; men call It variously." This text of the Rig Veda, the oldest Scripture of the world, proves that the conception of the one Supreme Being, without a second, came as a revelation to the purified souls of those great sages. Since that remote antiquity the principle of "unity of the Supreme Being under a variety of forms," has become the corner-stone of the structure of the universal religion of Vedânta. God is one, without a second; yet He is worshiped by different nations under various names, such as Brahman, Jehovah, Varuna, Shiva, Vishnu, Ahura Mazda, Father in Heaven,

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Iswara, Divine Mother, Ti, Tien, Allah, Buddha. To know that one Lord of the universe, to commune with Him, to pour forth the supplication of our loving hearts at His feet, and in time of distress to pray to Him for help and mercy—this has always been the ideal of religion.

Age after age the great religions of the world have produced sages and saints, seers and prophets, Saviors and Incarnations among different races. Having obtained glimpses of that Omnipotent and Eternal Being, they have taught others, and directed them in the path of spiritual realization and God-vision. Each one of these great prophets has saved the world, or a portion of it, from the evil effects of sin and wickedness and has rescued some souls from moral and spiritual destruction.

Is it not true that Moses, the prophet of Judaism, saved the Jewish nation from superstition and ignorance, from lawlessness and wickedness, by giving them laws and commandments, by showing them the path of righteousness and by instructing them in

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the highest moral and spiritual ideals? Think for a moment what would have been the condition of the Jews had they not received these ideals, laws and commandments, from the founder of their faith! History tells us that before the advent of the great prophet of Judaism, the tribes of Israel were groping in the darkness of ignorance and superstition, and were worshiping tribal gods in the form of the bull and the calf. They were engaged in sun-worship, in Kewan or Saturn worship, tree and serpent worship, and were appeasing the wrath of their gods by bloody sacrifices, nay—by shedding human blood upon their altars. Indeed, Moses saved the Jewish people from utter destruction, made a nation of them, and prepared the field for the Incarnation of the Savior Christ. He saw the same God who had been worshiped by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, conversed with Him, and received His commandments which he afterward delivered to his lawless and superstitious people. Thus Moses became the messenger of God, Yahveh, and the Savior of the Jews. He also founded that great

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religion which still claims millions of votaries scattered all over the world. They find peace and consolation by following the path of Moses, and expect through his instructions to receive salvation after death.

The power and greatness which were displayed by him were not his own; but they came direct from the Supreme fountain-head of all powers and greatness. Moses himself was but an instrument in the hands of the Almighty Yahveh. Shall we then wonder why the Jewish people reverentially worship the memory of their master, honor and regard him as the greatest prophet of their Lord; and why they do not recognize any other prophet as greater than, or even equal to, the founder of Judaism? No, it is the natural outcome of the gratitude and devotion which a nation must have for its leader, benefactor, law-giver and Savior.

As the Jews owe to Moses their moral, spiritual and religious ideals of the higher life, so the Iranians or Parsees are indebted to their great prophet Zoroaster; the Chinese to Confucius and Lâo-Tze; the Christians to

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Christ; the Buddhists to Buddha; the Arabs to Mahomet, and the Hindus to their Saviors. Each one of these was a leader and a law-giver to the people among whom he was born. Each one was a messenger of the Supreme Lord of the universe, a prophet and a Savior in one form or another. Each one saw God, communed with Him, received His message, and directed his people. The followers of one may not recognize the prophets and saviors of other Faiths; may not regard them as equal to their own, and may even think that theirs is the only one—the greatest of all; but the truth remains the same. Whether they can see Divinity in other prophets or not, those others are nevertheless messengers of God. Believers in sectarian religions cannot realize that the Lord of the universe manifests Himself among all nations, and in all ages, because their spiritual eyes are blinded by the screen of fanaticism and bigotry, and they have become narrow-minded, illiberal and unspiritual in their views. They are not to be blamed, for they do not possess higher perceptions, and can-

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not see the greatness in all these divine Instruments of God.

Some people think that their forefathers (whether Jew, Parsee, Christian, Mahometan, Chinese, Hindu or Buddhist), were the only ones favored by the Almighty Lord, and consequently the prophet who arose among them was the greatest of all, and the unique Savior of the world. Such ideas are entirely erroneous, for God is the just and impartial Lord of all nations, and not of one particular people. Wherever His manifestation is most needed, there does He send either His messenger, prophet or Incarnation. The difference lies only in the powers of manifestation, but all of them are mighty. If we try to limit the Infinite and All-merciful Being by our narrow ideas and make Him finite, who else but we ourselves will be responsible for it? If we cannot recognize Divinity in the prophets and saviors of other peoples then we have not realized the Divinity in the prophet of our own; we have not, then, understood the eternal truth of "Unity of Godhead behind the variety of names and

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forms." If a mother does not recognize her own son when he changes the color of his garment or puts on the dress of a foreigner, we are sure that she is not his true mother. Similarly, if a Christian, who sees Divinity in Christ alone and does not know Him when He comes in the form of Buddha or Krishna, or in any other form, we are sure that he has not realized the Divinity of his own Master. How can we call him a true servant who does not recognize, revere and serve his Master when the Master changes His costume? He is not truly religious who does not see unity and harmony among all prophets and Incarnations of the Lord, because true religion lies, not in the profession of a creed, nor in the belief in a certain set of doctrines and dogmas, but in the realization of the Eternal Truth, that the one and the same Being manifests Himself in and through a variety of forms under different names at various cycles of evolution.

According to Vedānta, the universe moves in cycles of wave forms. These waves of evolution rise, reach their zenith and gradu-

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ally subside, to rise again in another wave. This cyclic evolution is to be found on the physical, mental, moral and spiritual planes of the universe. If we study the history of humanity we see that nation after nation has risen, reached the climax of progress and civilization, and has gradually passed into oblivion, making room for others to rise. But always we notice that on the highest plane of the spiritual evolution of mankind there is a shining soul, a prophet, a Savior or an Incarnation.

Divinity dwells on the topmost crest of the spiritual wave of humanity. Whoever reaches the summit is transformed by that self-effulgent Light from a human, into a Divine being. He becomes a God-man, a Messenger, a Savior of the ignorant masses. Indeed, He is a part of the Divinity ; He is no longer human, and through Him flow the Divine powers and transcendent wisdom of the Lord. Whatever He says is authoritative and is the standard of Truth Divine. He neither reasons nor argues, nor does He care to give any proof for curious and unbelieving

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minds. By His magnetic personality, He draws around Him all those who are heavily laden with the sorrows and cares of the world, and who seek peace, rest and happiness. Such great Souls direct the suffering and the miserable in the path of righteousness, show them the way to salvation, and the abode of blissfulness. They bring spiritual life and strength to struggling humanity. Ignorant minds alone declare that there has been only one manifestation of God, and that that was the first and the last.

All true prophets and messengers of God are great. Each one of them was commissioned by the Almighty to deliver His message to the people among whom He lived. Each one of them was a glorious Son of God, adorned with Divine qualities, a perfected soul manifested for the good of humanity to establish righteousness and to destroy evil.

By the law of cyclic evolution, the powers which these Saviors leave behind them rise from a small center, and spread like a tidal wave, inundating the world and everywhere

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fertilizing the soil of human minds with divine ideals. Then, in course of time, when that wave subsides, another prophet, Savior or Divine Incarnation appears in another place where such a manifestation is needed and where conditions are mature.

Moses brought the message of the Lord to the Jews who lived about 1400 years before the Christian era. His mission was suited not to the whole world for all ages, but to the tribes of Israel and their descendants. What he gave to them was a blessing. No one prophet or Savior has ever succeeded in bringing all people of the world under His power and direction, nor will He succeed in ruling over the world forever. Time brings changes, and new manifestations will be necessary. No one can say, "My Master will be the Master of all nations and will fulfil the spiritual needs of all ages." Would to God that it were possible for one such manifestation to supply the demands of all nations, for all ages and for all climes! This world then would have been saved from religious quarrels, fights, persecutions and inhuman

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bloodshed; but that could not be, because unity in variety is the keynote of the Divine Will. It works through various forms, but the ideal of spirituality always remains the same. Who can change the Divine plan?

What the Jewish people needed about 1400 years before Christ, was not required among the Hindus at that time. History shows that the evolution of their minds was then on a different plane; they were not lawless, nor were they worshipping tribal gods, planets and trees. They had the conception of one Supreme Being; consequently, they wanted something different from what Moses gave to the Jews; and to fulfil their demands and prayers, came in India, Sri Krishna as their Savior. He is worshiped by millions of Hindus as the Incarnation of God, and is regarded in the same light as Christ is in Christendom, for He has fulfilled the needs of that country.

Again, about 660 B. C. the Iranians, the ancient inhabitants of Persia, reached the culmination of culture and spirituality, and upon the crest of that spiritual wave, appeared the

shining soul of the prophet Zoroaster, the founder of Zoroastrianism. He gave to those people what they required. Moses could not reach them, nor could any other prophet fulfil their needs and longings. About the same time there arose in China Lâo-Tze and Confucius who granted to the Chinese whatever they needed, and showing them the path of morality and righteousness, became the Saviors of China. Lâo-Tze established the highest ideals of true spirituality and Confucius gave the code of ethics, both bringing salvation to their people from wickedness and immorality. This tidal wave at that age covered the vast area of the Asiatic continent. Prophets, sages and Saviors arose in its different parts and on the highest point of the wave there appeared in India another great Savior, in the form of Gautama Buddha, the illustrious founder of the Buddhistic Faith. He brought the Divine message of noble Truths, which He gave to the world, and saved millions of souls from sorrow, suffering, misery, disease, death, self-delusion and ignorance, and showed them the path to

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Nirvâna. Nearly six hundred years after Buddha—a period which is roughly calculated by Oriental scholars as the cycle of a new spiritual wave, the glorious Son of God incarnated in Palestine in the form of Jesus the Christ. He gave His message to the world, and whether the world accepted it at that time or not, is not the question. He fulfilled His mission and passed away.

But that light which shone before the world from the center of Palestine could not dispel the darkness of Arabia. The Arabs remained in ignorance, superstition and idolatry until six hundred years after Christ, when appeared Mahomet, the prophet of Islam, who gave salvation to his people, showed them the path of righteousness, and led them away from their lawlessness, to the worship of the one Lord of the universe, under the name of Allah.

About the same time in India, a tremendous unrest was caused by the corrupted form of Buddhism which had swept away the higher ideals of ethics and religion. Atheistic and agnostic views replaced the worship

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of One Supreme Deity. The Hindus needed a re-adjustment—a re-establishment of the universal truth—and then arose Sankarâchârya, who revealed the ancient Faith and re-established the universal religion of Vedânta. Sankarâchârya is regarded in India as the incarnation of Shiva and the embodiment of Divine wisdom. About six hundred years after Him, Râmânûja appeared in the South of India, and Chaitanya in the North. Both of these are revered, honored and worshiped as Incarnations of Divine Love, and as the Saviors of mankind. They preached that the Lord of the universe is Infinite Love and that whosoever worships Him with whole-hearted love and true devotion will attain to salvation and everlasting bliss. Lastly, in the Nineteenth Century, there came Bhagavân Sri Râmakrishna with His mission for the people of this age and for the future. His message was to establish the universal religion and to destroy the evils of sectarianism, bigotry and narrow-mindedness. He is worshiped to-day in India as Christ is in Christendom, and is regarded by

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His followers as a Savior of Mankind and as the consummation of all the prophets and Saviors of the past. It is believed that His message is most fitted for the present age of science and rationalism. Râmakrishna gave a death blow to all religious intolerance and fanaticism by emphasizing the truth that all sects are like different paths which lead to the same goal. He propagated His mission among the most enlightened classes of people in modern India, and it is now spreading all over the world. In this cycle of reason and science one cannot remain sectarian and hold dogmatic ideas and narrow views. This is the spirit of the age, and it needs such a manifestation as the embodiment of non-sectarianism, toleration and universal sympathy for all religions.

Some of these great ones are recognized by the masses as prophets, some as messengers of God, while others are worshiped as Divine Incarnations, as Saviors of humanity. Moses, Confucius and Mahomet, are called prophets of the Lord; Zoroaster and Lâo-Tze are regarded as the messengers of God, while

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Krishna, Buddha, Christ and Râmakrishna, are classed with the Saviors of the world. Each of these has fulfilled His Divine mission by setting an example of purity, unselfishness and disinterested love for all; each has shown the path of salvation from sin and suffering; has established the highest ideals of spirituality, and has led human beings to the abode of truth and happiness beyond the ocean of death. The followers of each have obtained immortal life and God-consciousness. Shall we deny such messengers of God? Shall we remain so blind as not to see the divine manifestation in these great ones? Shall we be so narrow, intolerant and prejudiced as to accept only one Savior, simply because our forefathers worshiped Him, and on that very ground alone, reject and disregard the other prophets and Saviors of the world? Nay! Nay! The time has come when we must put aside all sectarianism and bigotry and become broad and liberal, so as to follow them all, and place them upon the altar of that universal Religion which is all-embracing and infinite in its scope. No sec-

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tarian religion has ever been tolerant enough to accept the teachings of all prophets and Saviors of all nations; if this were possible, the world would be different. But to-day, by the light of scientific knowledge we are able to recognize the various Divine manifestations of all countries.

In this age of reason people are beginning to outgrow all opinions and limitations. The death-knell of dogmas, creeds and fanaticism has been sounded, and the sincere seekers after Truth are brought near the threshold of that universal Religion which is nameless. They are more ready now than ever before to see unity and harmony underneath the diversity of sects and religions. If we close our eyes and do not see it, who is to be blamed? For the message has come to us and we should receive it—"The Kingdom of Heaven is within you." Let us open our eyes and behold the divine glory and realize the greatness of our souls! Blessed are they who have become followers of this grand universal Religion!

A preacher of the universal Religion is one

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who has seen God and who has realized divinity in all of those who are worshiped as the Incarnations of God and the Saviors of the world. Such a preacher is very rare. If you ask me whether I have seen God, I will answer, "He that hath seen the Son hath also seen the Father." The latest manifestation of Divinity was in the form of Bhagavân Sri Râmakrishna. Him I have seen, therefore, I have seen God and through Him I have realized Christ, Buddha, Chaitanya, Krishna and other great prophets and Saviors. Whoever worships Râmakrishna, consciously or unconsciously worships Christ, Buddha, Krishna, as well as the God of the universal Religion Who is nameless and formless. Have we not heard that message which He has given to the world again and again—"He Who was Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Râma, Chaitanya, has now become Râmakrishna." Shall we not receive that divine message? Shall we not listen to that voice? Yes, because His utterances contain the spirit of this age; we must consider them seriously before we turn a deaf ear to them. Why

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did Râmakrishna say that? If there were no truth in it, what object could have been gained by Him, Who lived most of His life in divine communion without seeking anything from anybody, and Who renounced all worldly relations for realization of the Eternal Being? He used to say, "My Divine Mother has shown me this truth; I do not know why." He considered Himself as the child of God who is both Father and Mother of the universe.

The Lord of the Universe graciously reveals Himself in that special form to which the earnest, sincere and purified soul of a true devotee is attached, to fulfil his prayers and to give enlightenment, spiritual strength and salvation. If we are devoted to Christ we shall go to Him, and in that form we shall see God. If we are devoted to Buddha, Krishna, Jehovah or to any other form, we shall realize God through that particular manifestation which we love with our whole heart and soul. Whosoever wishes to receive Divine grace should ceaselessly pray to Him as Christ, Zoroaster, Mahomet and Râma-

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krishna did at all hours of the day and night. The Lord will surely grant the prayers of His faithful devotee and save him from sorrow, suffering, misery, disease and death. Have faith in the Lord and do not doubt even for a moment. "He who has faith has everything, and he who doubts has nothing"—this is the teaching of all messengers of God and of all the Saviors of the world. All prophets and Divine Incarnations are unanimous on this one point, that faith is constructive and doubt is destructive. Therefore we must have faith, first in ourselves as children of God, then in **the** Divine Ideal, the Eternal Father and **Mother** of the universe, and then in the Savior or the Master who represents that Ideal, and everything else will be added unto us.

The Lord says, "Whosoever comes to Me through whatsoever path, I reach him; all men are struggling in the paths which ultimately lead to Me—the Infinite Abode of bliss and love."

KRISHNA AND HIS TEACHINGS.

Krishna and His Teachings

KRISHNA, the Christ of India, is regarded as a Savior of mankind and His teachings are known as the "Bhagavad Gitâ" or the "Song Celestial." Those who have studied this Divine Ode have often wondered at the vast wisdom of its Teacher, and have asked: "Who was Krishna? When did He live, and what were His works?" Oriental scholars and Christian missionaries have often compared His life and teachings with those of Jesus the Christ. Some of them have denied the historical personality of Krishna; while others have tried to prove that He was a mythical god of ancient India, and that He did not exist at all. Again, after noticing the wonderful similiarity that exists between the lives of Krishna and Christ, many have come to the conclusion that the whole story of Krishna's life and teachings is based upon

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the life and sayings of Jesus the Christ, and that the Krishna-cult of the Hindus did not exist before the first invasion of that country by the early Christian missionaries. Furthermore, some of the followers of the Christ were so astonished at finding in India a religion so near like their own, that they could only account for it by supposing that the devil, foreseeing the advent of their Savior, originated a system of religion in advance of His, and just like it.

All these ingenious explanations of the Christian scholars and missionaries have not succeeded in quenching the fire of reverence, devotion and love, which was kindled upon the altar of the Hindu heart by the unparalleled character and divine powers of Krishna, the God-Incarnate, Savior of mankind.

Waves of conquest and religious fanaticism have come to India from the West, one after another, and have swept away by their tremendous on-rush, millions and millions of lives and the most glorious spiritual monuments which that country had produced; but

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still the marvelous ideal and the spiritual kingdom of the sin-atoning Krishna have remained for ages firm as the unshakable Himalayas, defying their strength and destructive power. The fanatical Mahometans invaded India, holding their Scripture, the Koran, in one hand, and a sword in the other, and brought terror and havoc in the heart of Hindu communities, ruined the temples of Krishna, looted the country, massacred the innocent priests and priestesses, sages and saints, and converted many to their faith of Islam by mere brute force; notwithstanding all this, the illimitable powers of the Divine Krishna have survived the ravages of time. He still reigns over the hearts of the Hindu people, and will continue to reign in time to come.

In the present age, the Christian missionaries, supported by the enormous resources of the English-speaking nations, are trying with head and heart to place their ideal Jesus upon the altar of Krishna, and to convert His followers to their religion; but the undying divine powers which Krishna has manifested,

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will surely be able to withstand the futile efforts of ordinary mortals.

The name of Krishna is heard in almost every corner of the Hindu community throughout the length and breadth of the vast empire. His sweet and holy name is uttered and reverentially repeated at all hours of the day—in sleeping, in waking, in working, in prosperity, in adversity, in times of woe and suffering, as well as during festivities and national rejoicings. The popular songs which are sung in India by the illiterate masses, describe the superhuman deeds and boyish sports of the Divine Krishna, the Shepherd of mankind. In victory and in defeat, in nuptial ceremony or crematory rite, at the time of birth and death, the name of Krishna is uttered by millions of worshipers with the deepest feelings of devotion, love and reverence. In short, they have coupled the name of Krishna with everything that takes place upon the earth whether good, bad or indifferent. For the last three thousand years He has ruled over the heart of the nation as the most beloved Lord and Savior of all.

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The life of Krishna, to the Hindu mind, is as historical as the life of Jesus the Christ to the Christian. It is, of course, a well known fact that no one has yet succeeded in giving authentic evidences to establish the truth of all the stories that we read in the synoptic Gospels regarding the life of the Christ. On the contrary, the historic personality of Jesus has been denied over and over again by the most able scholars and higher critics of Europe and America. Still, the majority of Christians, disregarding their opinions, believe in the Lord Christ as a historic personage, worship Him, revere Him, and expect to obtain salvation through Him after death. Similar is the case with Krishna, the Hindu Christ. There have been scholars in India who have denied His historic personality; some have regarded Him as a mythical deity, while others have given authentic proofs of His earthly career. The masses of people however do not recognize such criticisms, but consider Krishna as a veritable personage who lived among the Hindu people as a great Hero, and showed His divine

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powers in order to establish His spiritual kingdom on earth. Whether or not we can give the exact time, date and year of the advent of Krishna, so far it is certain that His name was known in India hundreds of years before the Christian era. Centuries before Christ, Krishna was not only loved, honored and worshiped, but was recognized by the vast majority of Hindus as God-Incarnate and Savior of Mankind. The most authentic evidence in favor of this point can be gathered from the accounts of Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador of Seleucus, who lived in India in the court of Chandragupta, the Buddhist monarch, in the fourth century B. C.

After the invasion of India by Alexander the Great, between 333 and 327 B. C., Seleucus Nikator became his successor and ruled over the entire region between the Euphrates and the Indus, and sent his ambassador to the court of Chandragupta, the reigning emperor of India. These are all historical facts. Megasthenes lived in India for several years and left some records describing his experi-

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ences there which have been preserved and handed down by Arrian the Greek historian. Among other things Megasthenes says: "He, the Indian Heracles, excelled all men in strength of body and spirit, he had purged the whole earth and sea of evil and founded many cities; and after his death, divine honors were paid him." "This Heracles is especially worshiped by the Sourasenians, an Indian nation, in whose land are two great cities, Mathura and Cleisobara, and through it flows the navigable river Johares (Jumna)."* This Cleisobara or Chrysobara is identified by some with Calisapura,† but it was supposed by Pliny the historian to be the same as Krishna-pura, the city of Krishna—probably modern Dwâarakâ—which was founded by Krishna. Ptolemais mentions Mathura as the city of the gods. Prof. Lassen identifies this Indian Heracles with Krishna, while Prof. Wilson and other Oriental scholars think that the Heracles of the

*Translation of "Arrian's Anabasis of Alexander and Indica," by E. J. Chinnoek, p. 408.

†See Higgins' *Anacalypsis*, Vol. I, p. 329.

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Greek writers was indubitably Balarâma, the brother of Krishna.

Respecting the Hercules of India, Captain Wilford says: "The Indian Hercules, according to Cicero, was called Belus. He is the same as Bala, the brother of Krishna, and both are conjointly worshiped at Muttra; indeed, they are considered as one Avatâr or Incarnation of Vishnu. Bala is represented as a stout man with a club in his hand. He is called also Balarâma. As Bala springing from Vishnu or Heri* he is certainly Hericula, Heri-culas, Hercules."†

Arrian says that Alexander the Great saw those cities and other kingdoms governed by Surasenas, or the descendants of the royal family of Krishna. "Both Arrian and Strabo assert that the God Krishna was anciently

*"Heri," in Sanskrit, "*Hari*," means a Savior; and "Cula," the direct descent from a family. Therefore, Hercules means a direct descendant of Hari, the Savior. This word, according to Higgins, is admitted to be neither Greek nor Latin, but of barbarian origin. See *Anacalypsis*, Vol. I, p. 329.

†Asiatic Res., Vol. V, p. 270.

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worshiped in Mathura on the river Jumna, where he is worshiped at this day, but the emblems and attributes essential to this deity are also transplanted into the mythologies of the West.”*

These historical accounts show how unfounded are the remarks of the Christian missionaries who believe that the whole story of the life of Krishna and His teachings was based upon those of Jesus the Christ. On the contrary, it is proven that Krishna existed centuries before Christ, and His teachings were already in writing at the time of the invasion of Alexander the Great. Sir William Jones, the father of Oriental scholars in Sanskrit, after residing in India for several years said: “That the name of Chrishna† and the general outline of his history were known in India long anterior to the birth of our Savior and probably to the time of Homer (900 B. C.) we know very certainly.”‡

*Quoted in Monumental Christianity, pp. 151, 152.

†Sir William Jones always spells the name of this personage, “Chrishna.”

‡Asiatic Researches, Vol. I, p. 273.

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Sir Godfrey Higgins, one of the best English scholars and antiquarians of the last century, after making proper investigations and researches as far as he could, came to the conclusion that Krishna lived at the end of the Brazen Age. "He passed a life of the most extraordinary and incomprehensible devotion. His birth was concealed from the tyrant Kansa, to whom it had been predicted that one born at that time and in that family would destroy him, i. e. his power."* Mr. Higgins says: "In fact the sculptures on the walls of the most ancient temples—temples by no one ever doubted to be long anterior to the Christian era, as well as written works equally old, prove beyond the possibility of doubt, the superior antiquity of the history of Cristna to that of Jesus."† Again, he refutes the arguments of his opponents against the antiquity of Cristna by saying: "Cristna, his statues, temples and books, etc., respecting him are to be found where a Christian never came. Is it not absurd to

*Asiatic Researches, Vol. I, p. 273.

†Anacalypsis, Vol. I, p. 160.

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suppose that the Brahmins could invent the story of Cristna and make it dovetail into all their other superstitions—make him form an integral part of their curious Trinity, the actual Trinity of ancient Persia and of Plato—make him also fit into the theological inferences of the modern Christians respecting the meaning of the first 'chapter of Genesis—make his story exactly agree with the orthodox massacre of the innocents, and finally make all this be received as an ancient doctrine and article of faith by millions of people, who must have known very well that it was all perfectly new to them and that they had never heard of it before.”*

Captain Wilford, in his “Chronology of the Hindus” fixed the date of Krishna and Parâsara, who were contemporaneous with the Emperor Yudhisthira, as about 1180 B. C. while the astronomer Davis, as well as Colebrooke, believed that they lived as early as 1391 B. C. Mr. W. Brennard, the author of “Hindu Astronomy,” says: “The received opinion, however, as before stated, is that

*Ibid, p. 337.

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Yudhisthira (with Garga and Parâsara) lived some time about the 12th or 13th centuries before the Christian era.”*

Furthermore, the most ancient sculpture of India in the Cave of Elephanta, near Bombay, representing the ferocious figure of King Kansa (like the Herod of the Christian Bible), surrounded by slaughtered infant boys and holding a drawn sword, cannot be accounted for even by the ingenious theory of the Christian missionaries. This fact not only proves that Krishna lived centuries before Christ, but also establishes the antiquity of the whole story of His miraculous birth, His escape from the tyrant Kansa, the infanticide by this wicked King and the other principal events of the divine life of this Savior.

The popular belief among the orthodox Hindus is that He lived toward the end of “Dwâpara Yuga” or the Brazen Age; and the present Iron Age, or “Kali Yuga,” began on the very day when Krishna ascended

*“Hindu Astronomy,” p. 119.

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to heaven. According to this belief or tradition, He must have lived about 3091 B. C.

But modern Hindu scholars like Babu Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and others have fixed the historical date of Krishna and of the battle of Kurukshetra, as 1430 B. C.*

Although the name Krishna occurs many times in the Hymns of the Rîg Veda—such as in verse 23, Hymn 116, Book or Mandala I; also in verse 7, Hymn 117, Mandala I—Oriental scholars cannot trace the identity of this Krishna, and whether he was the son of Devaki and Vasudeva. In one passage of the Chândogya Upanishads, we find the name of Krishna, the son of Devaki. Again, Krishna was also the inspired Rishi (seer) of many Hymns (85-87 of Mandala VIII;

*See "Krishna Charitra," by B. C. Chatterjee, p. 22, also pp. 43-48. According to this author the Emperor, Yudhisthira, a contemporary of Krishna, lived 1115 years before Chandragupta the great Buddhist monarch, who defeated Seleucus Nikator, the successor of Alexander the Great, in a battle, and drove the Greeks out of India, becoming the Emperor of India in 315 B. C. He married the daughter of Seleucus. Therefore the date of Yudhisthira was $315 + 1115 = 1430$ B. C.

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and 42-44 of Mandala X) of the Rig Veda. From this we learn that He was contemporaneous with Vyâsa who divided the Vedas into four parts.

The Sanskrit Grammar of Pânini, who lived in the eleventh century B. C., mentions the name of Yudhisthira, Arjuna and Vâsudeva (the son of Vasudeva), another name of Krishna.

Furthermore, in the Mahâbhâshya, or the Great Commentary by Patanjali, on Pânini's Sanskrit Grammar, which dates at least the second century B. C., we find convincing proof that the story of Krishna and Kansa was current and popular during his lifetime, and that Krishna was worshiped as a God.

Prof. Bhândârkâr of Bombay mentions the following allusions to Krishna in the Mahâbhâshya: (1) That the stories of the death of Kansa and the subjugation of Bali were popular and current in Patanjali's time.

(2) That Krishna or Vâsudeva was mentioned in the story as having killed Kansa.

(3) That such stories formed the subjects of dramatic representations, as Purânic

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stories are still popularly represented on the Hindu stage.

(4) That the event of Kansa's death at the hands of Krishna was in Patanjali's time believed to have occurred at a very remote time.*

Another convincing proof that Krishna was an important Deity in India, long before any Christians visited the country, we gather from the Bhitârî pillar inscription, dating probably the second century A. D., which was transcribed and translated by Dr. W. H. Mill. The passage in Dr. Mill's translation reads thus: "May he who is like Krishna, still obeying his mother Devaki, after his foes are vanquished, he of golden rays with mercy protect **this** my design."† The German Antiquarian Lassen corrects it thus: "Like the conqueror of his enemies, Krishna encircled with golden rays, who honors Devaki, may he maintain his purpose."‡

*Indian Antiquary, Bombay, Vol. III (1874), p. 16.

†Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, January, 1837, pp. 1-17.

‡Indische Alterthumskunde, ii (1849), p. 1108. note.

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These evidences will be enough for our present purpose to convince the reader that Krishna was a historic personage, and that He lived centuries before Christ.

Now let us see under what circumstances He was born. If we study the monumental Sanskrit works of the ancient Hindu writers, which describe the life of our Hero, we shall find that long before the advent of Krishna, it was prophesied by ancient Hindu sages and seers of Truth, that in the latter part of the Brazen Age, and before the beginning of the "Kali-Yuga" or the present cycle, when the earth would be over-burdened with sin, evil and evil doers, a divine Savior would incarnate in the royal house of Yadu, would be born of Devaki, a holy virgin, and relieve the oppressed earth of its burden of sin and sorrow. Captain Wilford, the English antiquarian, referring to this prophecy said: "The advent of their Savior Krishna occurred in exact fulfillment of a prophecy found in their sacred books."

As the close of the Brazen Age was coming nigh, the signs of sin and evil such as

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wickedness, treachery, murder, ill-treatment of women and children, moral and spiritual depravity were visible in almost all parts of India. Kings and their subjects became extremely sinful; priests and priestesses grew insincere and hypocritical; the worship of the Supreme Being, the One Lord of the universe, was regarded as useless, and the masses of people, instead of worshipping Him, were devoted to the minor *Devas* or bright spirits, such as Indra, Agni, and offered bloody sacrifices to propitiate them. Kings grew tyrannical; sages and saints found no peace, being constantly threatened, oppressed and over-taxed by these despotic monarchs. At such a period of the decline of virtue and righteousness, the most cruel and wicked king of the royal line of Yadu, deposed his God-fearing father, Ugrasena, and usurped the throne of Mathura, the holy city and capital of Hindustan. His name was Kansa; he was so tyrannical that the bare mention of his name was enough to terrorize all, and to send a thrill of panic and despair through the hearts of those who were good and peace-

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loving. He was so wicked and despotic that he would slaughter anybody and dispense no justice. Although he was so unrighteous and sinful, he had a sister whose name was Devaki (the divine woman), who was very pious, pure and chaste. In the Hindu Scriptures she is described as one through whom the designs of the Lord were accomplished. She spent most of her time in solitude and in contemplation of the Supreme Deity, would burst into tears at the sight of her brother's cruelty, and prayed day and night for peace, justice and righteousness among the people. No animal food ever touched her lips. This description reminds one of the character of Mary the mother of Jesus, as given in the "Gospel of Mary," where it is said that no animal food ever touched her lips.

Devaki was given in marriage to a good man of royal blood, by name Vasudeva (the divine Vasu). Before the marriage ceremony was completed, the King suddenly heard a celestial voice warning him, "The fruit of this marriage shall be the cause of thy death and shall overthrow thy kingdom." Hear-

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ing this, King Kansa was startled. He flew into a rage, drew his sword and ran after his sister to kill her on the spot. The newly married husband, Vasudeva, intervened and begged of him to save the life of his innocent wife. King Kansa did not know what to do; he retreated but said that he could save her life only on one condition—that he would destroy all of her children immediately after their birth. Vasudeva, with a broken heart, finding no other way out of this unforeseen situation, was obliged to agree to the inhuman proposition of the brutal King Kansa, and promised that he would present to him all children that would be born of them. The King then withdrew, trembling with anger and fear, reluctantly sparing the life of his sister who would be the mother of his enemy and destroyer.

The newly married couple were extremely unhappy and miserable at this unforeseen event. The unfortunate Vasudeva and Devaki, followed by a large crowd of friends and relatives, left the palace, and crossing the sacred river Jamuna by boat, went to Gokula

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where Vasudeva's friends and relatives, headed by Nanda, the shepherd chief of the town, had arranged a grand reception for the wedding party. But they soon discovered that both Vasudeva and his wife were trying to suppress the outburst of their sorrowful hearts; that they were most unhappy and miserable and that they were mourning over some kind of misfortune that had befallen them. When the weeping Vasudeva described the cause of their sorrow, the sad news came to Nanda and his friends like thunder rending their tender hearts and crushing all feelings of joy and happiness which they would have experienced on such an occasion. The whole company began to cry for help and protection against the wicked deeds of the heartless tyrant King Kansa; but Nanda, who was a wise and spiritual soul, soon realized that it was the Will of the Lord that such a thing had happened, and consoled the suffering couple by asking them to resign themselves to the mercy of the Supreme. Vasudeva and Devaki attained peace in their minds by surrendering

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their own will to the Divine dispensation.

Vasudeva lived quietly with Devaki in Gokula and enjoyed the peace and happiness of a righteous family life. In course of time, Devaki became the mother of a beautiful male child. Vasudeva, true to his promise, sent the glad news to Kansa who instantly ordered his demoniac attendants to bring the child to him. When they obeyed the royal command, the cruel King with his own hands destroyed the little thing. In this way Vasudeva had to sacrifice seven children, like the seven Maccabean brothers, before the Son of God came to him to relieve the earth of her load of sin and evil.

Before the birth of his eighth son, Vasudeva came with his wife to Mathura to pay taxes to King Kansa.* The cruel and heartless King, hearing that Devaki was going to be a mother, imprisoned them both in the dark cell of a dungeon within the compound of the palace. There the innocent couple had to spend many days and nights

*Cf. Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem to be taxed. (Luke, Ch. II, 4, 5.)

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without food, drink, or any kind of comfort whatever. They passed their time in extreme agony, praying to the Lord every hour of the day for relief from the diabolical persecutions of the tyrant. Their hands and feet were chained with heavy iron chains and they were watched day and night by armed sentinels.

At last, after midnight on the eighth day of the moon, in the Hindu month of Bhâdra (about the middle of August) when every creature was enjoying sound sleep, the Divine Son descended upon this earth in a dark cave of that prison. Immediately after His birth, the whole cave was illumined by the celestial light which emanated from the body of the newborn Savior. The Devas (Angels), appeared in the cell, singing the praises of Krishna and His Holy Mother, bowed down at His feet, called Him the incarnation of Vishnu—the Second Person of the Hindu Trinity—and worshiped Him with flowers; while celestial music filled the atmosphere. These unusual events frightened the parents as they did not know what was going to hap-

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pen; but remembering the fate of their seven children, they burst forth in tears and prostrating themselves on their faces, cried aloud



THE HINDU MADONNA.*

in utter despair, "O Lord, why hast Thou sent Thy Son to us in this prison? How can we save His life? Have mercy upon us and protect Thy Child from the hands of that

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cruel and inhuman King Kansa." When they were weeping, crying and praying, the Babe comforted His parents by saying: "O mother, O father, weep no more; thy troubles and cares are over. I have come to rescue thee and save mankind. Behold My divine power." The child then manifested His spiritual glory and showed them His transfiguration. He said, "Carry me, O father, to thy friend Nanda who lives in Gokula; cross the Jamuna river, exchange me with his new-born infant and return here." Thus saying, He became the babe once more; and from this time began the manifestations of the most wonderful powers of the Lord—the heavy iron chains were loosed, the doors of the seven gates of the palace were unlocked and opened at midnight, and the sentinels, who had been watching over them, enjoyed, as it were, the sleep of death, and did not know what was happening. Vasudeva carried the baby in his arms, covering Him with swaddling cloths, went to the banks of the Jamuna; and the mighty river with its swift current giving way, he forded it easily, the

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water not rising above his knees. Thus Vasudeva crossed the waters safely in the dead of night, and arrived at the home of his friend Nanda. The doors of the house opened miraculously, and he entered into the nursery, where he found a child playing in a basket (almost like the basket which they use today for feeding the cattle), exchanged the babes unnoticed by any mortal, took the other in His arms, and came back the same way to Mathura before daybreak.

In the meantime, Nârada, who is described in Hindu mythology as the messenger of God, who can go freely to any place in no time, appeared before the wise men, sages, saints and innocent shepherds, heralding, like the morning star, the advent and glorious rise of the divine Sun, the Savior of mankind. The next morning the shepherds and wise men, saints and sages, came from all quarters to see the Son of God, worshiped Him and presented the offerings of curd, milk, flowers, fruit, gold and incense at His holy feet. The wise men noticed in His little form the signs of an Avatâra, or Incarnation

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of the Supreme Deity, and gave Him the name Krishna—the Redeemer of the world.

There in the palace, the cruel King Kansa was notified by his attendants that a child was born in the cell of the prison. Immediately the babe was brought before him, but when he looked at it, finding that it was a female child, he flew into a rage of anger and exclaimed, "The wicked child is trying to deceive me, I shall get rid of it immediately." Seizing the infant in his hands to throw it on a stone, as he advanced, he stumbled, and the child slipped out of his hold, laughed and disappeared in the air, declaring in a thundering voice, "He who will destroy thy power is growing in Gokula." It is said in the Hindu Scriptures that in this manner inscrutable divine powers were manifested by Krishna, the Lord of all. Immediately King Kansa ordered that all male children in Gokula must be destroyed, and sent around demoniac persons to kill Krishna and His step-brother Balarâma, who were growing in that neighborhood. This description is more authentic than that of the infanticide of

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Herod, because King Kansa, like Herod of the New Testament, was a historic person. Christian scholars and higher critics of the Bible, however, maintain that King Herod had died at least ten years before Christ was born.

The divine powers that were manifested through the body of Krishna were able to overcome all the evil influences and destructive forces that came toward Him, and He destroyed all those demons and wicked persons who were sent by Kansa. Many miracles are described in the Sanskrit literature relating to the life of Krishna, which may not be interesting to Western readers, but some of those miraculous events are similar to those found in the life of Jesus as described in the Apocryphal gospel of I, Infancy. As Krishna grew older, He lived in Gokula, and played in the most beautiful forests and groves of Vrindâvana. There His playmates were His step-brother Balarâma and the shepherd boys and shepherd girls. They all recognized in Krishna divine powers, used to make wreaths of wild flowers and tender leaves of wild trees, weave crowns of them and place them

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on His head, calling Him the king of shepherds.

Krishna used to dance with the shepherd boys and girls, play the flute and sing, captivating the hearts of all by His sweet, musical voice. Even at this age, between eight and twelve, Krishna displayed His superhuman powers and attracted the devout souls of the inhabitants, making them feel the presence of Divinity in their midst; and they in turn, all revered and honored Him as their Lord, their Master and their King.

Krishna at one time found that all the cattle, sheep, and His playmates (the cowboys and girls), were lying dead, having been poisoned by drinking the water of the lake Kâliya, in which lived the demon of a huge serpent, who wished to destroy all the friends of Krishna. He jumped into the lake, assuming the weight of the three worlds, as it were, and, standing on the head of the serpent, bruised it and destroyed the demon. He then brought the dead cattle and shepherd boys and girls back to life. In India there are pictures and statues of

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Krishna with a huge serpent at His holy feet.

In this manner Krishna spent His childhood and the early part of His youth working miracles, resuscitating the dead, healing lepers, giving sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf; defending the weak against the strong and the oppressed against the oppressor. Even at this age, He established the worship of the one Supreme God, and abolished sacrifices to the minor gods like Indra. At one time all the inhabitants of Vrindâvana were engaged in the worship of Indra, the Vedic god of thunder and rain. Seeing this, Krishna said: "What is the use of praying to the minor *Deva* Indra, the god of thunder? Be devoted to the Supreme Lord, and see His presence in all human beings. Feed the poor, and give to the needy." It is said that Indra grew extremely angry, and deluged the earth with torrents of rain to destroy his enemies; but Krishna saved the lives of His followers by miraculously protecting them in the cave of Govardhana mountain. There He transfigured Himself into His divine Form,

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and showed His superhuman powers to all.

Again, Krishna is said to have revived the life of a widow's son who was dead. After performing all these, and many other miraculous deeds in His pastoral life, He, as He reached His youth, determined to return to the city of Mathura, which was governed by the tyrant Kansa, to fulfil the ancient prophecy by destroying the powers of that wicked King. On His way He was followed by a multitude of shepherds and shepherdesses. He entered the city dressed as a shepherd boy, but all the inhabitants hailed him as their king. In the crowd a hunchbacked woman, Kujâ by name, came near Krishna, and anointed Him with oil and sandal-wood paste. Krishna in return pardoned her sins, made her straight and beautiful, and promised that His regard for her would remain perpetual. Even to this day, if we go to Mathura we will hear everybody speaking of the good fortune of this deformed woman. We may compare this with the account of the deformed woman given in Luke, Chap. XIII, verses 11, 12.

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Krishna also forgave the sins of a tailor who adorned Hîm with royal robes. Thus, in the midst of loud acclamations of joy rising from the souls of all the inhabitants, Krishna, accompanied by His heroic brother, Balarâma, entered the palace of Kansa, fought with the wicked King and his party, and won the victory of righteousness over evil, by destroying him and his sinful comrades. Thus Krishna, having fulfilled the old prophecy, went down to the dungeon of the prison to release His father Vasudeva, His mother Devaki, and Ugrasena, the aged father of Kansa, who had been treacherously deposed by His wicked son from the throne of Mathura. According to the Hindu law, Krishna, being the conqueror of Kansa, had absolute right to the throne of Mathura, but He showed His greatness and dislike for earthly powers by installing Ugrasena on the throne, and restoring to him his lawful kingdom. Thus our divine Hero re-established peace and righteousness among the inhabitants of the vast realm. All people rejoiced at this change, especially the

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parents of Krishna, when they realized that it was their own son who had brought an end to their misery and suffering, and fulfilled the divine promise.

From this time Krishna lived happily with His parents and friends in Mathura for a few months, and did not return to Vrindâvana to stay with His foster-parents—the shepherd King Nanda, and his wife Yashodâ.

Up to this age Krishna had received no education of any kind. So His parents sent Him and His stepbrother Balarâma to Benares (the Athens of Ancient India, and the seat of science, philosophy and Vedic wisdom) to study under Sandipani, the great sage and spiritual teacher. It is said, in the Mahâbhârata, that Krishna mastered all sciences and Vedic wisdom in twenty-four hours and that seeing His uncommon talents the sage marvelled and exclaimed that Krishna was not a man, but verily, the God of wisdom in human form. However, Krishna, following the custom of a Hindu student, lived with His tutor for some time. During this period He practised austerities, penance, fasting and

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all spiritual exercises enjoined in the science of Yoga. The Mahâbhârata says that He, finding His spiritual Master, Sandipani, mourning over his dead son, asked him what He could do to relieve him of his sorrow. Sandipani, knowing that Krishna was not an ordinary mortal, begged of Him to bring his son back to life.

It is said that Krishna, in search of the soul of the boy, plunged into the sea, where He encountered the demon of a dragon, fought with him, killed him, took his huge shell, and finally went down into Hades. He blew the giant's shell which made such a terrific noise that all the inhabitants of Hades were frightened by it. Krishna, the Savior of sinners, was moved at the sight of their sufferings and graciously pardoned their sins and sent them to celestial regions. At last, finding the soul of Sandipani's son, He miraculously brought him back to the earth, and offered him to His master. A similar story of going down to the Hades is described in the life of Jesus the Christ in the sixteenth chapter of the Apocryphal gospel

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of Nicodemus. The only difference in the description is, that when Christ went to the door of Hades the inhabitants heard a voice of thunder and the rushing of winds. On another occasion, Krishna is said to have revived the dead child of Uttarâ.

After He returned to Mathura from Benares, Krishna discovered that the city was under a siege by the enormous army of Jarâsandha, the powerful King of Magadha (modern Behar), and the father-in-law of the dead King Kansa. Krishna, by His commanding skill, succeeded in routing the army, and raising the siege of the city. Jarâsandha attacked again and again (seventeen times), in order to take revenge, and to punish the slayer of his son-in-law.

Krishna, desiring to avoid such repeated attacks, moved the capital of Ugrasena's Kingdom to the Island of Dwâarakâ, where He built a large city, well protected by sea and high mountains. But Jarâsandha continued his attacks against Dwâarakâ until he was defeated and killed by Bhima, the giant-like brother of Arjuna.

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Born of a warrior caste, Krishna was unrivaled in strength and heroic valor. Even at the time of His marriage with Rukmini, the most beautiful daughter of Bhishmaka, the King of Vidarbha, He showed His heroism by outwitting Jarâsandha and Sishupâla, who were His rivals and bitter opponents.

He installed Yudhisthira, the eldest brother of the Pândavas, on the throne of Hastinâpura as the Emperor of India, and thus, as a King-maker, He settled the destiny, not only of the ruling monarchs of India, but of the whole Hindu nation of that age. Although Krishna was so divinely powerful, yet He was so meek, gentle and humble, that at the great inaugural ceremony of Emperor Yudhisthira, He voluntarily took the task of washing the feet of all the guests.

It is said that Krishna fulfilled the earnest prayers of Draupadi by miraculously feeding the multitude with a small quantity of food, as well as by saving her from insult and ignominious treatment in the hands of the Kauravas.

Again, Krishna was appointed as the peace-

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maker to stop the Civil War that had been brewing for sometime between the Kauravas and Pândavas. The speech which He delivered before the Court of Dhritarâstra proves that Krishna was the greatest statesman of that time. In that famous address He said to Duryodhana, the chief of the Kauravas: "Make peace, prince of the Bharata race, with the wise, brave and energetic Pândavas, great in learning and self-subjugation. From peace would proceed happiness to kinsmen and friends, aye my dear, to the whole world. . . . The man who having heard the advice of his friends followeth it not, is tormented in the end," etc.

Those who have read the Mahâbhârata, the history of ancient India (which is called the greatest book in the world), will remember that during the battle of Kurukshetra, Krishna appeared in the battle field, not as a warrior, but as a charioteer, to advise His friend and disciple, Arjuna. He did not hold a weapon against warriors, but stood like the Divine Witness of the great battle, which lasted for eighteen days. By this act, Krishna

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proved before the world that He did not believe in war; that he did not encourage fighting and quarrels among any classes of people whether rulers or the ruled, that He was a peacemaker, and that He stood for justice and righteousness; but His policy was to defend the oppressed against the oppressor. It was for this defence of justice, as well as for the protection of the weak that He was obliged to hold arms against anybody.

On the eve of the battle of Kurukshetra, Krishna immortalized Himself as an Incarnation of the Lord and as the greatest of spiritual philosophers, by singing the celestial song of the Bhagavad Gitâ, which has been translated into every language of the civilized world.

In the Tenth Chapter of the Bhagavad Gitâ, Krishna says to Arjuna:

“Hear again, O thou of mighty arms, My word supreme, which wishing thy welfare, I shall speak to thee as thou delightest to hear.

(1)

“Neither the hosts of gods nor the great

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seers know My origin; for I am the Source of all the gods and the great saints. (2)

“He who knows Me as birthless and beginningless, as the Supreme Lord of the Worlds is undeluded among mortals, and is emancipated from all sins. (3)

“Intelligence and wisdom, absence of delusion, forgiveness and truth, self-control and subjugation of the mind, pleasure and pain, birth and destruction, fear and fearlessness, feelings of non-killing and of sameness, contentment, austerity, munificence, fame and shame—from ME alone arise these different kinds of disposition. (4, 5)

“The seven great Rishis, the four mind-born sons of the Creator, and the Manu, or the first man of each evolutionary cycle were born of My mind, and endued with My essence—of them have descended all these creatures of the world. (6)

“He who knows in truth this glory and divine power of Mine is endued with unshaken realization; there is no doubt in this. (7)

“I am the origin of all, and everything

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evolves from Me—knowing this, the wise worship Me with love.” (8)

In the Eleventh Chapter it is said that Arjuna, after seeing the wonderful transfiguration of Krishna, declared:

“I see the gods in Thy body, O God, and all the multitudes of varied beings. (15)

“I see Thee with infinite forms all around, but cannot find the beginning, middle or end of Thy universal Form.” (16)

“Thou art the Imperishable, the Supreme object of Knowledge, the great abode of the universe. Thou art the unchangeable protector of the Eternal Religion, and I know that Thou art the everlasting Spirit. (18)

“Without beginning, middle or end, with infinite power, with endless arms, with the sun and moon as Thine eyes, and the blazing fire as Thy mouth, I see Thee scorching the worlds with Thy radiance. (19)

“The space between the heaven and the earth and all the quarters are pervaded by Thee alone. Having seen Thy marvelous and awful form the three worlds are trembling.” (20)

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Every word of this description bears testimony to the fact that Krishna was the Incarnation of Divinity in a human form.

As on the one hand Krishna was the greatest of the political heroes, a King-maker, and the founder of the City of Dwârakâ, and has been recognized by all as the ideal statesman, so on the other hand, He was the greatest of the spiritual heroes that India has produced. All the wise men of India of all ages have paid allegiance to Lord Krishna, and have accepted Him as their spiritual leader and as the Savior of mankind.

The teachings of Krishna resemble those of Jesus the Christ, and constitute the teachings of Vedânta.

The reader may compare the following quotations from the Twelfth Chapter of the Bhagavad Gitâ with the teachings of Christ.

“He who hates no creature, but is kind and compassionate to all, who is free from attachment, and egoism, equanimous in pleasure and pain, forgiving, contented, meditative, self-restrained and firm in faith, whose

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heart and soul are directed to ME, is dear to ME. (13, 14)

“He with whom the world is not annoyed and who is not annoyed by the world, who is free from self-esteem, envy, fear, and anxiety, is dear to ME. (15)

“He who is free from leanings, pure, vigorous, above all temporal affections, free from worldly agitations, who has abandoned all passionate endeavors, is dear to ME. (16)

“He who neither rejoices nor hates, neither grieves nor desires, who has renounced merit and demerit, and is full of devotion and love, is dear to ME. (17)

“He who is the same toward friend and foe, in honor and dishonor, in heat and cold, in pleasure and pain, free from attachment, with whom censure and praise are alike, who is taciturn, content with any condition, homeless and steady-minded, is dear to ME. (18, 19)

“They who follow this eternal law as spoken above, endued with faith and regarding ME as the highest goal and devoted, are exceedingly dear to ME.” (20)

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ized and proved the truth of the grand ethical law—"wherever there is virtue, there is victory and glorious life both in this world and hereafter; and wherever there is vice, unrighteousness, injustice and immorality, there is destruction physically, morally and spiritually."

As a spiritual teacher Krishna practised and advocated the life of renunciation. For many years He Himself lived a pure, chaste and austere life of a Sannyâsin, who is absolutely free from worldly ties, and it is for this reason that He has become the ideal of the Sannyâsins or Hindu monks who have broken the chains of attachment and worldliness.

The students of the Bhagavad Gitâ know that Krishna established the Fatherhood of one Omnipotent personal God; taught peace, charity, love for human beings as also for lower animals, kindness to all, unselfish and disinterested work for the good of humanity, and faith in the inexhaustible goodness of the Supreme Lord of the universe. He forbade revenge and taught His disciples to re-

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turn good for evil, and love for hatred. He preached the immortality of the soul and the reward and punishment of our own thoughts and deeds by the law of Karma; emphasized the truth that individual souls are eternal, and that each soul will reach salvation and perfection in the end. His religion was the religion of love and devotion. It is said that "His lofty precepts and the purity of His life spread His fame throughout all India and finally won for Him, more than three million followers."

For the first time in the religious history of the world was preached by Krishna universal toleration for all sects and creeds, and it was He who declared: "Whosoever comes to Me through whatsoever religion, I reach him. All men are struggling in the paths which ultimately lead to Me." He inculcated that all religions are like so many paths which in the end lead the individual souls to one goal of absolute Truth and happiness. Thus He sounded the death-knell of religious bigotry and persecution among various sects. It was for this reason that, since His time,

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there has been no religious persecution in the history of India.

Thus after establishing His spiritual kingdom on earth and fulfilling His divine mission, Krishna wished to depart from this world of imperfection. When the exact time of His ascension to Heaven arrived, He forbade His disciples to follow Him, and went alone to the forest on the top of a hill at Prabhâsa near Dwârakâ. There he reclined against the trunk of a tree, crossing His bare feet, and withdrawing His mind from the world of senses, entered into deep *Samâdhi* and communed with the Infinite. While He was reposing in this Yoga posture, His feet were shot through with the arrow of an unknown barbarian hunter. When the hunter came nearer, thinking that it was a deer that he had shot, he discovered that his victim was Lord Krishna Himself. Overcome by grief at the sight of his inhuman deed, he fell at His wounded feet, kissed them, and bathed them with tears of repentance. He begged pardon for his sin and forgiveness for his brutal crime; but the Savior of sin-

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ners smiled, and blessed him saying: "Thou hast fulfilled the prophecy of the old sage, and I forgive thy sins; thou shalt go to Heaven." Krishna went into *Samâdhi* again and remained motionless. His disciples and followers hearing of this heartrending event came to see Him, and when they were mourning and weeping bitterly, He comforted them by giving them His last instructions and blessings; and promising that He would come again, He passed out of His body and ascended to the heavens in the presence of men and gods. Thus ended the glorious career of this wonderful Savior of ancient India.

Shall we wonder why the Hindus of to-day worship and honor the name of Krishna, and why He has been upheld as the highest Ideal of the nation, during the last 3,000 years? No other Incarnation of Divinity appeals to the minds of the Hindus so strongly as this sin-atoning Savior of mankind. As He has been the national Ideal in the past, so will He remain in time to come. Every Hindu believes in the second coming of Krish-

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na at the close of the present cycle and realizes that whosoever worships Him attains to salvation and eternal happiness. Krishna Himself promised this in the Bhagavad Gitâ: "Giving up all the formalities of religion, come unto ME, follow ME, take refuge with ME. I shall make thee free from sins and shall give thee Eternal Life; grieve not."



ZOROASTER AND HIS TEACHINGS.

Zoroaster and His Teachings

ALL the great religions of the world, Judaism, with its two offspring, Christianity and Mahometanism; Brahminism, with its offspring, Buddhism and Lâmâism; and Zoroastrianism, had their origin in Asia, the home of all religions. Judaism, Christianity and Mahometanism arose among the various branches of the Semitic race, while Buddhism, Lâmâism and Zoroastrianism have been the religions of the Aryan race. It is the unanimous opinion of the great Oriental scholars of to-day, that in prehistoric ages the forefathers of the Aryan peoples lived together in Central Asia before they branched off and migrated to different parts of the world; that they spoke one language, more primitive than ancient Sanskrit or Zend, the mother of all existing Aryan languages of Asia and Europe, believed in

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a common religion and had one form of worship. The descendants of one branch moved northwestward and migrated to five different parts of Europe. It is believed that the Celts originally belonged to the Aryan race, that they settled in the extreme west of Europe, in France, Great Britain, Ireland and Belgium; the robust Teutons in Northern and Central Europe; the Slavs, in the Eastern parts (Russia and other places); and the Italian and Greek peoples in the South.

The other branch of the Aryan family settled in the Southern part of Asia, between the rivers Indus and Euphrates, and were known at that time by the name of Indo-Iranians. A religious schism then divided the Indo-Iranians into two branches, which gradually became separated under the names of Indo-Aryans, or Hindu-Aryans, or the Hindus who settled in the Northwestern part of India, and the Irano-Aryans, or Iranians who settled in Iran, or ancient Persia. The belief, worship and religion of the Hindu-Aryans have been handed down to us in the form of the Rig-Veda, the most ancient

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Scriptures of the world. There we find that these ancient Hindu-Aryans were monotheistic, worshipping one God under the name of "Asura Varuna." "Asura" means "living," and "Varuna" (Greek, "*Ouranos*"), the "Lord of the universe." Although they believed in minor gods or *devas* (bright spirits), Varuna was the God of all gods. The same Asura Varuna, was worshiped by the Iranians as Ahura Mazda. After the religious schism, the "*devas*," or good spirits of the Vedic period, were called "*daêvas*" (evil spirits or demons) by the Iranians. The cause of that schism was, perhaps, that the Iranians gave up the worship of Ahura Mazda (the Supreme Lord of the universe), and took to the worship of those who are described in the Vedic scriptures as demons or evil spirits, and that they began to practise black magic, sorcery, witchcraft, and gradually became immoral and unrighteous. Thus relinquishing the early race ideals, and separating themselves from the Hindu-Aryans, the Iranians became more and more degenerate and immersed in a sea of ignorance, superstition,

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demon-worship, witchcraft, sorcery, immorality, vice and unrighteousness; while the Hindu-Aryans retained their spiritual ideals, as we find in the Vedic writings. They developed six systems of philosophy and the monistic religion of Vedânta, which is so beautifully described in the ancient Upanishads.

The greatest prophet among these ancient Iranians was Zoroaster, who manifested in order to re-establish true religion and the worship of Ahura Mazda, the Supreme Lord of the universe. Zoroaster was preceded by three great Iranian saints, Vivanghant, Athwya and Thritha, as Moses was preceded by three great Jewish sages—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is said that long before the advent of Zoroaster, King Yim of Iran, foresaw in a vision the perfect image of the coming sage, and prophesied the defeat and absolute overthrow of the demons at the birth of the glorious prophet. Many other prophecies are given in the Avestic writings, which existed centuries before the coming of the great Savior of Iran. Some people think

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that Zoroaster was not a historic personage, just as there are many to-day who believe that Shakespeare never lived, that the life of Napoleon was a myth, and that Christ, Buddha and Krishna were not historic figures, but the majority of the Oriental scholars are of the opinion that the prophet of Iran was absolutely historical.*

Although there is among them a dispute regarding the exact date and place of his birth, some say that Zoroaster lived about 6000 B. C., others maintain that he was born in Bactria about 12000 B. C.; but the actual historical time cannot be earlier than the middle of the Seventh Century B. C. The prophet of Iran was a direct descendant of the royal line of the house of Mānūshcīhar, the ancient sovereign of Iran. His father's name was Pourushaspa, and his mother was

*Prof. A. V. W. Jackson says: "It is the more interesting to know something about the life and character of this Persian law-giver and philosopher of old, this religious teacher of ancient Iran, because much has been added in the last few years to our knowledge of Zoroaster as a historical personage." ("Persia, Past and Present," p. 57.)

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known as Dughdhova. Tradition says that he arose in the West of Iran, and that his native place was the district of Atropatene, or Adarbaijan, in the neighborhood of Lake Urumiah.

The story of the birth of this great prophet is as miraculous as the stories of the births of other great Saviors of the world. It is said that the glory of Ahura Mazda descended from heaven and entered into the house where dwelt the future mother of the prophet, and remained with her until she was fifteen years of age. At this time, her father, being under the influence of evil spirits, was convinced that she was bewitched by some demon, and so sent her away to the district of the Spitamas. There, guided by the holy spirits and archangels, Dughdhova married Pourushaspa, of the Spitama family, and became the mother of the prophet of Iran. Various miracles are described regarding the time when the conception took place, and they are of a similar nature to those of Christ, Buddha, and Krishna. It is said that Dughdhova saw archangels coming to her,

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worshiping and praising the unborn child. The birth of Zoroaster, like the birth of all Saviors of the world, was of a virgin mother, was heralded by a star, and many other spiritual signs and omens, and accompanied by the most wonderful events. The Scriptures of the Zoroastrians recount that at the time of the birth of the Savior of Iran, all nature rejoiced, even the trees, rivers and cattle expressed joy and gladness, and that the evil spirits were frightened, and took flight into the depths of the earth. It is also said that his birth was a perfect fulfilment of the prayers of the holy father, Pourushaspa, to Haoma (the same as the Vedic *Soma*). Thus, amidst the rejoicings of nature and miraculous signs, the great messenger of Ahura Mazda was ushered into this world about the year 660 B. C. to fulfil the Divine Mission. Well has it been said by Professor Jackson: "Messiahlike he appears, and the land of Iran rings with his clarion note of reform. He is born as one out of the fulness of time."* Tradition says that at

*"Persia, Past and Present," p. 59.

the time of his birth he showed wonderful signs of wisdom and divine powers. Instead of crying like the child of an ordinary mortal, the young prophet immediately burst forth into loud laughter, and his little brain began to throb so violently that no one could lay his hand upon the infant's head. The parents rejoiced at the sight of these marvellous events, and many angels and archangels were seen coming to worship him. They gave him the name of "Spitama Zarathustra," meaning "Righteous," in Iranic language. "Spitama" was the family designation, and "Zarathustra" was his name. There are different ways in which this name has been spelled and pronounced. Some spell it "Zarathustra," others "Zartust," "Zardusht," "Zardusht," and so on. There are various meanings given by scholars to this name, which are more or less imaginary; but now it is believed that "Zarathustra" is a Sanskrit compound word, "Zarad" and "Ushtra;" "Zara," or "Zarad" means "old," and "Ushtra" "camel"—"an old camel," or "one whose camels are old,"—a very prosaic name

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indeed! The Greeks called him Zoroaster for the first time, but he was known in Iran, and in the ancient Zend writings of the Parsees as Zarathustra.

From the moment of the Savior's advent, demons and wicked spirits intrigued against him to take his life, and the Turanian King, Durasrobo, the chief of the demon-worshipers was the Herod of that time. This wicked king made various attempts to destroy the young child, and sent all the demoniac spirits to kill him; but by divine providence the life of the young Savior was miraculously preserved, and the machinations of the king were frustrated.

We know very little of the early life of the prophet of Iran, excepting these miracles. In his seventh year, he was placed by his father, Pourushaspa, under the care and instruction of a wise man, named Burzin Kurus. The Syriac and Arabic reports say that Zarathustra, was a pupil of the prophet Jeremiah, that he studied with him, and when he proved treacherous, he was cursed by Yahveh with the affliction of leprosy. At this age, how-

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ever, Zarathustra showed his great wisdom in argument with the wise men—he rebuked the heretics, and put them to confusion, in the same manner as the Christ did, when he was twelve years old.

At the age of fifteen he took religious vows, by assuming the “Kusti,” or the sacred thread and the religious girdle, as did the Brahmins in India upon entering a student’s life. Like the high-caste Hindus, the Iranians, or Parsees, still wear their sacred thread. At this time Zarathustra despised all earthly desires, and cared nothing for worldly pleasures. His soul was soaring high above the attractions of the senses. He searched not for the enjoyments of earthly life, and had great love and compassion, not only for all humanity, but for all living creatures. The sight of misery and the misfortunes of humanity touched his great soul; even the sufferings of a starving dog, it is said, stirred the all-loving soul of the great Savior of Iran.

Reaching the age of twenty, he left his parents’ house, and wandered from place to

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place, living the life of purity and righteousness. For ten years he traveled in the forests and desert places, and lived alone in caves and on mountain-tops, eating nothing but cheese and milk. In the silence of his forest-retreat, he succeeded in conquering his physical body, and bringing his senses into absolute subjugation. He spent most of his time in religious preparation, reflection and meditation. His spiritual eye gradually opened, and he was ready to see prophetic visions. In the stillness of that lonely desert his soul, transcending the attractions of the world of senses, rose high and entered into the ecstatic rapture of *Samâdhi*, communion with the Supreme Being, Ahura Mazda, the Lord of the universe. As the great prophet of Judaism communed with Yahveh upon the summit of Mount Sinai, so did Zarathustra with Ahura Mazda, on the top of Mount Sabatan, the Iranian Mount Sinai. During this time, he received spiritual visions and wisdom from the Lord, for he was following the path of the ancient Magi. Herodotus tells us that the ancient Magi always used to

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worship on the tops of high mountains. We should remember that the word "Magi" was used for the ancient Median tribe of priests who lived in Persia long before the time of Zarathustra and he himself was often called the "Magian prophet," "The head of the Magians," because he supported the wisdom and learning of the ancient masters.

Thus, after spending ten long years in preparing himself for spiritual realization, the prophet of Iran received in his thirtieth year, the Divine Light of revelation, and became the world-renowned messenger of Ahura Mazda. The first Divine revelation came to him on the banks of the Dâiti River (the Jordan of Zoroastrianism), at dawn of the fifth day of May, of the thirty-first year of the reign of the Iranian King, Vishtasp. It is described in the Avestic writings, that after crossing the river four times, as the prophet stood on the banks, he suddenly beheld, coming towards him from the South, the glorified celestial image of an archangel. It was Vohumanah, the archangel of good thought. Gradually that colossal figure, nine times the

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size of an ordinary man stood before him, radiant with celestial glory,* and Zarathustra whose eyes were dazzled, fainted at this unexpected vision. The archangel then commanded him to lay aside the garment of his physical body, and directed his soul in ecstatic *Samâdhi* to the heavenly abode of Ahura Mazda and the *Amshaspands*, or archangels, the personified qualities and attributes of Ahura Mazda. After entering into the celestial abode, Zarathustra offered his homage to Ahura Mazda and His attendants, and took the seat of an enquirer. Then the Supreme Lord Himself instructed the prophet in the cardinal doctrines of the Faith, and imparted divine wisdom to him.

It is said that this vision was repeated three times on the same day. Thus being initiated by the Supreme Lord Himself Zarathustra became the Savior of Iran; and obeying the commands of Ahura Mazda, he began to preach that great religion which was afterwards known as Zoroastrianism or

*It reminds one of the vision that appeared to Daniel on the River Hiddekel.

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Mazdasnanyan or Mazda-worshipping religion. He tried at first to convert all demon-worshippers and evil men and women, as well as their chiefs who are known in the Zend-Avesta, as Kavis and Karaps. But his powers were not yet strong enough and he failed in his attempts. For two years he struggled hard to find the right soil wherein to sow the seed of his new religion, but he did not succeed. At this time Zarathustra, obeying the command of Ahura Mazda, visited a rich Karap, Vaedvoisht by name, and demanded one hundred youths, maidens and teams of four horses, as a gift for the Lord. But the prophet received an arrogant rebuff, and fled to the Lord for refuge. The Lord comforted him by assuring him that the offender would receive eternal punishment after death. This reminds us of Elijah, who pronounced the doom of Ahaziah when he did not recognize the God of Israel.

Zarathustra traveled from place to place, and it is said that he went to India and to China, and that no one received his message. He became greatly discouraged, and did not

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know what to do, but again was comforted by Ahura Mazda, who said: "The time has not yet come, thou needest further revelations." Between the thirtieth and fortieth year of his age, Zarathustra had six more prophetic visions, and among these he held converse with six great archangels, who were the presiding lords of animals, fire, metals, earth, water and plants.

In the second vision Vohumanah, the archangel of good thought—who was also presiding lord of domestic animals, such as cattle and horses—asked Zarathustra to take proper care of all these useful animals, and to protect them. In his third vision, Asha Vahishta, the archangel of perfect righteousness, who was the presiding lord of sacred and secular fires, enjoined upon the prophet the care and protection of all fires, sacred and secular. In his fourth ecstatic vision he held converse with Khshathra Vairya, the archangel of good royalty, who presides over metals, and who assigned to him their care. Then in the next three visions Zarathustra had conference with three other archangels:

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Spenta Armaiti, the archangel of pious modesty, ruling over earth; Haurvatat, the archangel of perfect health, ruler of waters; and lastly, Ameretat, the archangel of Immortality, who was also the presiding lord of plants.

These six ecstatic visions of paradise, following the first one on the banks of the Dâiti River, may be compared with the seven heavens of Mahomet. By their means Zarathustra became well acquainted with the celestial hierarchy of God, the angels, and archangels. During these ten years he received the whole of his spiritual revelations and the wisdom that is contained in the Zoroastrian Scriptures, the Zend-Avesta. He brought from Heaven the highest knowledge of the Supreme Lord, Ahura Mazda, as also the Ahuna-Vairya, the Paternoster of Zoroastrianism. As he was descending from the celestial abode, he was attacked on his way by the combined forces of evil that stood against him. Ahriman, the Satan of Zoroastrianism, intrigued to destroy him once more, and sent his chief attendant "Buiti,"

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to tempt and overthrow the messenger of Ahura Mazda; but he was defeated by the spiritual powers of Zarathustra.

Zend-Avesta says:

"1. From the region of the north, from the regions of the north, forth rushed Angra Mainyu, the deadly, the Daêva of Daêvas. And thus spake the evil-doer. Angra Mainyu, the deadly: 'Drug, rush down and kill him;' O holy Zarathustra! The Drug came rushing along, the demon Buiti, who is deceiving, unseen death.

"2 (5). Zarathustra chanted aloud the Ahuna-Vairya: 'The will of the Lord is the law of righteousness. The gifts of the Vohu-Mano to the deeds done in the world for Mazda. He who relieves the poor makes Ahura King.'

"He offered the sacrifice to the good waters of the good Dâitaya! He recited the profession of the worshippers of Mazda!

"The Drug dismayed, rushed away, the demon Buiti, who is deceiving, unseen death.

"3 (7). And the Drug said unto Angra Mainyu: 'Thou tormentor, Angra Mainyu! I

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see no way to kill Spitama Zarathustra, so great is the glory of the holy Zarathustra.'

"Zarathustra saw (all this) within his soul: 'The wicked, the evil-doing Daêvas (thought he) take counsel together for my death.'

Ia.

"4 (11). Up started Zarathustra, forward went Zarathustra, unabated by Akem-manô, by the hardness of his malignant riddles; he went swinging stones in his hand, stones as big as a house, which he obtained from the Maker, Ahura Mazda, he the holy Zarathustra.

"'Whereat on this wide, round earth, whose ends lie afar, whereat dost thou swing (those stones), thou who standest by the upper bank of the river Darega in the mansion of Pourushaspa?'

"5 (16). Thus Zarathustra answered Angra Mainyu: 'O evil-doer, Angra Mainyu! I will smite the creation of the Daêva; I will smite the Nasu, a creature of the Daêva; I will smite the Pairika Knâthaiti, till the victorious Saoshyant come up to life out of the lake Kâsava, from the region of the dawn, from the regions of the dawn.'

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“6 (20). Again to him said the Maker of the evil world, Angra Mainyu: ‘Do not destroy my creatures, O holy Zarathustra! Thou art the son of Pourushaspa; by thy mother I was invoked. Renounce the good Religion of the worshippers of Mazda, and thou shalt gain such a boon as Vadhaghna gained, the ruler of the nations.’

“7 (24). Spitama Zarathustra said in answer: ‘No! never will I renounce the good Religion of the worshippers of Mazda, either for body or life, though they should tear away the breath!’

“8 (27). Again to him said the Maker of the evil world. Angra Mainya: ‘By whose Word wilt thou strike, by whose Word wilt thou repel, by whose weapon will the good creatures (strike and repel) my creation, who am Angra Mainyu?’

“9 (29). Spitama Zarathustra said in answer: ‘The sacred mortar, the sacred cups, the Haoma, the Word taught by Mazda, these are my weapons, my best weapons! By this Word will I strike, by this Word will I repel, by this weapon will the good creatures

(strike and repel thee). O evil-doer, Angra Mainyu! The Good Spirit made the creation; he made it in the boundless Time. The Ameska-Spentas made the creation the good, the wise Sovereigns.'

"10 (35). Zarathustra chanted aloud the Ahuna-Vairya. The holy Zarathustra said aloud: 'This I ask thee: teach me the truth, O Lord!' "*

Thus conquering Ahriman, the prophet of Iran became the master of all demons and began to preach again. However, after ten years of struggle and spiritual activity, he made only one convert to his faith, and that was his own cousin, Métyomāh, who remained until his last moment as faithful as St. John the disciple. The triumph of his faith was not achieved until two years later, when he converted Vishtasp, or Gushtasp, the reigning monarch of Iran. For two years he had to struggle vigorously, and perform many miracles before he could convince this great king. The learned priests of the court of Vishtasp intrigued against him, accusing him before the

*Vendidad-Fargard XIX, pp. 209-212.

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king of being a sorcerer ; they also persuaded their sovereign to throw the prophet into a dungeon to die of starvation. It is said that Zarathustra remained in prison for some time, but protected by divine providence, and directed by the archangels, he miraculously restored to health the king's favorite black horse, whose four legs had been suddenly drawn up under his belly, so that he could not move. When this miracle was performed, King Vishtasp, became convinced of his supernatural powers, and falling at his feet, worshiped him as the prophet of Iran. The prophet restored the four legs of the horse on four conditions: First, that Vishtasp should accept the new Faith ; secondly, that he should give his own warlike son, Isfendiar, to fight in support of this religion ; thirdly, that the Queen should be converted ; and lastly, that the King should reveal the names of all those who had plotted against him. The King's counter-requests were also four in number: First, that he might know his final doom, and his place in paradise ; secondly, that his body might become invulnerable ; thirdly, that he

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might have universal knowledge; and lastly, that his soul might not leave his body until the resurrection. Three archangels appeared, and, with their celestial grandeur, brightness and majesty, dazzled the eyes of the monarch, his Queen, the members of the Royal family and of the court. As the archangels proceeded to the palace of Vish-tasp, their radiance seemed to him like a heaven of complete light. The King trembled at the sight, and all his chieftains were confused. A voice spoke out from the light, that they had come at the bidding of the Lord to show him the glory of the religion of Zardust. King Vishtasp was convinced. He accepted the creed, and had a glimpse of paradise. The archangel Ashavashistō gave him a drink of the fountain of life. Seeing the wonderful sight, Queen Hutaosa and the brother of the King were also convinced, and all of them became devoted followers of Zoroastrianism. The struggling creed now found a Royal patron and protector in Vish-tasp, who became the defender of the Faith and may be called the Constantine of this religion.

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It is said, that in order to commemorate the conversion of King Vishtasp, Zarathustra planted a cypress tree in front of the great fire-temple at Kishmar. Soon the tree grew very large, spreading its branches over an immense area. It was believed that this was a sign that the new faith would advance rapidly under the fostering care of the Royal patronage. From now on the gospel of Zoroaster, protected by sovereign power, continued to spread throughout the country. It was no longer confined to the small family of the reigning monarch, but all the subjects and attendants of the King, the people of Iran, and of the other provinces of Persia embraced the new religion.

Tradition says that Zarathustra defeated all the great philosophers and prophets of India, Babylon and Greece. There are stories in the Persian Scriptures regarding the conversion of Sankarâcharya, the great commentator of the Vedânta philosophy, who lived in the Seventh Century A. D. In the same manner it is narrated that Vyâsa, the renowned author of the epic Mahâbhârata as

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well as of the Vedânta Sûtras (aphorisms), who lived about 1400 B. C., was converted by Zarathustra. The Avesta also tries to make Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, his disciple. But all these stories were afterwards added to the Avestic writings, and did not exist at that time. Historically speaking, Vyâsa, Buddha and Sankarâchârya could not be contemporaries of Zarathustra. Similarly, the Avesta attempts to prove that some of the ancient Greek philosophers, like Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle, also became the disciples of the prophet.

The religion of Zarathustra spread very rapidly among the Jews (especially the Pharisees) in Babylon during the Babylonian Captivity. There is a tradition that he himself went to Babylon and converted thousands to his Faith, but there is no authentic proof that he did so. The Avesta relates that King Vishtasp, who was a very zealous supporter of the creed, vigorously started a crusade in behalf of the true religion against its enemies and all demon-worshippers. It is also said that Vishtasp was married twice, and that he

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had a large family by his second wife, who was a patroness of the prophet. He had eighteen sons and two daughters, all of whom embraced Zoroastrianism. The King's brother, Zairi Bairi, who was a great hero, became a staunch follower of this religion. Tradition says that Zarathustra himself married three times, and had many children. By his first wife he had one son, and three daughters; the youngest daughter, whose name was Pourucista, married Jamaspa, the wise councilor and chancellor of the King, and brother to Frashostra, the vizir and attendant upon Vishtasp's throne. By his second wife, the prophet had two sons. Frashostra, the vizir, became so devoted to Zarathustra that he gave his daughter to him to be his wife. This wife, Hvôvi, bore no earthly child, but is described as the noble consort of whom will be born three great millennial prophets of Zoroastrianism, Ukshyat-Ereta, Ukshyat-Nemah and the Messiah, Saoshyant. The Messiah will come on the last day of judgment, when this world of evil will be destroyed, and a new one will

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be created by Ahura Mazda. He will then overcome and destroy the powers of evil.

The Avesta says: "He (Saoshyant) shall restore the world, which will (thenceforth) never grow old and never die, never decaying and never rotting, ever living and ever increasing, and master of the wish, when the dead will rise, when life and immortality will come, and the world will be restored at its wish." (Zamyad Yast, 89.) This was the beginning of the conception of a spiritual Messiah in the Zoroastrian Faith.

Fifteen years elapsed between the conversion of King Vishtasp and the Holy Wars against his inveterate foe and mortal enemy Arjasp, the Turanian King, whom later history describes as the infidel Turk. During this period Zarathustra preached the gospel, and performed many miracles, took proper care of fires, cattle and metals; healed the sick, restored the sight of a blind man; established many fire-temples and spread his reform over all the country; exercised his powers in suppressing demon-worship, witchcraft, and sorcery; drove pestilence from the

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land, and succeeded in overcoming all national calamities and disasters. During this time, he himself acted as the chief priest of his own religion. There existed in Iran ten principal places of fire-worship before the time of the prophet and there were three kinds of fires for the three classes of people, according to their social position:—the fire for the noble classes, or the priests, which was the oldest, and was called the “fire of the divine glory,” which still exists among Zoroastrian priests in India. This was the most sacred of the holy fires of Iran. There was also a separate fire for the warrior classes and another for laboring classes. These three classes among the Iranians were like the three castes among the Hindu people of ancient India.

At the end of fifteen years the history of Zarathustra’s religion began a new chapter by declaring, in 601 B. C., holy wars, crusades, fights and bloodshed, which the prophet thought necessary for the spread of his Faith, and which continued till 583 B. C. During this period the war cry of the true faith

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against unbelief filled the air of Iran as it did later in Arabia when Mahomet preached his new religion and was opposed by the unbelievers. The Avesta describes in glowing terms the minute details of this holy warfare, and mentions some eight powerful enemies who were vanquished by King Vishtasp and his gallant brother Zarir (Zarivairi). It also relates how, at the invocation of the King and his brother for divine aid, Ahura Mazda sent victory upon their banners and thus fulfilled the prayers of His devotees.

The great holy war was against the Turanian King, Arjasp. It is said that King Arjasp, being inspired by the evil designs of Ahriman, and guided and directed by him, issued an ultimatum to the effect that King Vishtasp must abandon the new creed, or be prepared to have his country invaded within two months. Hearing this ultimatum, Vishtasp was very angry, but being unwilling to give up his Faith, to which he was devoted with his whole heart and soul, he declared a holy war against Arjasp. The Turanian King invaded the country with an army of 300,000

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men, and fought two battles within two weeks against 144,000 chosen men of Iran under the command of King Vishtasp and his heroic brother, Zarir.

Yatkari-Zariran says: "As the battle opened, the dashing leader Zarir began the fight as fiercely as when the god of Fire burst into a hayrick and is impelled onward by a blast of the storm. Each time as he struck his sword down, he killed ten Khyōns; and as he drew it back, he slew eleven. When hungry and thirsty he needed only to look upon the blood of the Khyōns and he became refreshed."

But Zarir was treacherously slain by a poisoned spear hurled from behind, by a magician, Vidrasfsh, who was promised the fair hand of Arjasp's daughter as a reward. After the death of Zarir, his young son, who was like a giant in strength took the lead, killed Vidrasfsh the traitor, routed the enemies, defeated Arjasp, and compelled him to retreat in humiliation to his own land.

Vishtasp marched back to the city of Balkh, the capital of Iran, and celebrated the victory

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by honoring the young hero, Bastvar and his own valiant son, Isfendiar. He sent Bastvar, the son of Zarir, at the head of an army of 100,000 picked men to Kallakh, the capital of Arjasp's country, in order to complete the conquest. Thus ended the first holy war.

King Vishtasp, the defender of the Faith of Zoroaster, then started crusades against unbelievers in foreign lands, and deputed his two sons upon the hallowed mission of converting all nations to the new religion. It is said that their efforts were divinely crowned with success.

Nearly eighteen years after his defeat the Turanian King Arjasp again invaded the country of Iran and the second holy war began. In this war Arjasp successfully stormed the capital of Iran, sacked the city, destroyed the holy temples and massacred the priests while they were engaged in their devotional exercises.

Shah Namah gives a graphic description of the final scene which closed the glorious career of the prophet of Iran: "The army (of Turan) thereupon entered Balkh and

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the world became darkened with rapine and murder. They advanced toward the Temple of Fire (Ataskadah) and to the palace and glorious hall of gold. They burned the Zend-Avesta entire and they set fire to the edifice and the palace alike. There (in the sanctuary) were eighty priests whose tongues ceased not to repeat the name of God; all these they slew in the very presence of the Fire and put an end to their life of devotion. By the blood of these was extinguished the Fire of Zardusht." It is also said that the fanatical invaders at last entered the temple of Nush-Adar where the prophet of Iran stood before the holy altar in his oratory, holding a rosary in his hand and praying to the Lord. A Turk, Turbaratur by name, attacked the prophet with his sword, and crushed the head of the Divine Master. Tradition says that Zarathustra threw his rosary at his enemy and that the fire proceeding from it fell on Turbaratur and consumed him on the spot. Thus Zarathustra received his martyrdom at the age of seventy-seven, on the day of Khur in the month of Atravahishtō, on the eleventh day

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of the second month of the Zoroastrian year.*

There are many legendary accounts, in Greek and Latin literature, of Zarathustra's death by lightning or a flame from heaven, but the Iranian tradition says that he met a violent death as described above. Thus the great messenger of Ahura-Mazda and the founder of the religion of Mazda-worship, passed away at the zenith of his glory, leaving hundreds of sincere followers who continued the propaganda of the Faith with fanatical zeal and enthusiasm.

The holy war ended at the defeat of Arjasp by Vishtasp's son, who drove him out of Iran, and pursuing his vanquished enemy into his own capital in Turan, massacred the people and destroyed the power of Ahriman by slaying the wicked king.

After the death of Zarathustra his prophetic mantle as the chief priest of the Faith fell upon his son-in-law, Jamaspa, who became his successor in the pontifical office of Iran. It was he who wrote down the teachings of

*Prof. A. V. W. Jackson reckons this date of Zoroaster's death as May 1st, 583 B. C.

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the prophet, which are called the Avesta and Zend, the Scriptures of the Zoroastrians. Frashaoshtra, the father-in-law of Zarathustra, became the first apostle of this creed and lived for many years expounding the doctrines of the Faith.

Zoroastrianism did not die at the death of its Founder, but began to spread rapidly, for the seed of this religion, like that of many others, was the blood of the martyrs slain. Within a short time it became the state religion of Persia, and remained such until the wave of Mahometanism swept over Persia, and destroyed by fire and sword its glorious monuments. Persia is now a Mahometan country, and few Zoroastrians are to be found there. They were persecuted and driven out of that land, and were obliged to take refuge in India, where religious toleration has always been the ideal of the Hindu nation. Here under the protection of the Hindu monarchs, the Zoroastrians have been allowed to follow their Faith, to practice their religious rites and ceremonies and to live peacefully in the heart of Hindu communities. They are

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known as Parsees. The principal place of their worship is the great Fire-temple in Bombay. To-day the Parsee population in India is less than one hundred thousand.

Although Zoroastrianism suffered great loss from foreign invaders,—the Greeks, Romans, Mahometans—it still has left indelible impression upon the religious creeds of Judaism, Christianity and Mahometanism. During the Babylonian Captivity, the Jews received for the first time the ideas of heaven and hell, of angels and archangels, of a spiritual Messiah, of the resurrection and the last Day of Judgment. These have given foundation to the doctrines of Christianity, and Mahometanism as well.

People have an erroneous idea that Zarathustra's religion was fire-worship. Fire was a sacred symbol in the Avesta, and was regarded as the son of Ahura-Mazda, but it is not described as God, nor to be worshiped. He did not teach the worship of fire, but the worship of the one Supreme Lord of the universe, under the name of Ahura-Mazda. Fire was only the sacred object, the symbol

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of the Divine, as it was in all ancient sacrifices. Zarathustra preached for the first time that all that is good and beneficial to mankind is the creation of Ahura-Mazda; and everything that is evil or malignant is the creation of the evil spirit Ahriman or Satan, (the Devil in Christianity). This good God, or the Spirit of light and brightness, is constantly opposed to the evil spirit, or the spirit of darkness. At first, Ahriman was one of the angels of Ahura-Mazda, against whom he rebelled. Being driven out of heaven by the Lord, Ahriman became His constant adversary. It was Ahriman, who brought evil into this world, to destroy the good creation of Ahura-Mazda; and this fight between good and evil will continue until the last day of judgment when the world will be renovated, and the triumph of good over evil will be the final result.

Zarathustra believed in heaven and hell, and said that all those who perform good deeds, hold good thoughts, and use good words will go to heaven, and attain to immortal life; while evil thoughts, evil deeds,

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and evil words lead the sinner to eternal hell. There is a paradise of good deeds and a paradise of good thoughts and of good words. At the dawn of the fourth day after death each soul is resurrected; the souls of the virtuous go to the paradise of good thoughts, good deeds and good words, and eventually enter into the abode of Ahura-Mazda, receive the golden throne, and enjoy celestial bliss; while the souls of the wicked suffer in endless darkness after resurrection. This is the universal law for all men and women.

We read in the Zend-Avesta, Yast XXII:

I.

"1. Zarathustra asked Ahura Mazda: 'O Ahura Mazda, most beneficent Spirit, Maker of the material world, thou Holy One!

"'When one of the faithful departs this life, where does his soul abide on that night?'

"Ahura Mazda answered:

"2. 'It takes its seat near the head singing the Ushtavaiti Gâtha and proclaiming happiness: "Happy is he, happy the man, whoever he be, to whom Ahura Mazda gives the full accomplishment of his wishes!" On that

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night his soul tastes as much of pleasure as the whole of the living world can taste.'

"3. —'On the second night where does his soul abide?'

"4. Ahura Mazda answered: 'It takes its seat near the head singing the Ushtavaiti Gâtha and proclaiming happiness: "Happy is he, happy the man, whoever he be, to whom Ahura Mazda gives the full accomplishment of his wishes!" On that night his soul tastes as much of pleasure as the whole of the living world can taste.'

"5. —'On the third night where does his soul abide?'

"6. Ahura Mazda answered: 'It takes its seat near the head singing the Ushtavaiti Gâtha and proclaiming happiness: "Happy is he, happy the man, whoever he be, to whom Ahura Mazda gives the full accomplishment of his wishes!" On that night his soul tastes as much of pleasure as the whole of the living world can taste.'

"7. At the end of the third night, when the dawn appears, it seems to the soul of the faithful one as if it were brought amidst plants

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and scents: it seems as if a wind were blowing from the region of the South, from the regions of the South, a sweet-scented wind, sweeter-scented than any other wind in the world.

“8. And it seems to the soul of the faithful one as if he were inhaling that wind with the nostrils, and he thinks: ‘Whence does that wind blow, the sweetest-scented wind I ever inhaled with my nostrils?’

“9. And it seems to him as if his own conscience were advancing to him in that wind, in the shape of a maiden fair, bright, white-armed, strong, tall-formed, high-standing, thick-breasted, beautiful of body, noble, of a glorious seed, of the size of a maid in her fifteenth year, as fair as the fairest things in the world.

“10. And the soul of the faithful one addressed her, asking: ‘What maid art thou, who art the fairest maid I have ever seen?’

“11. And she, being his own conscience, answers him: ‘O thou youth of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, of good religion, I am thy own conscience!’

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“‘Everybody did love thee for that greatness, goodness, fairness, sweet-scentedness, victorious strength and freedom from sorrow, in which thou dost appear to me.’

“12. And so thou, O youth of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, of good religion! didst love me for that greatness, goodness, fairness, sweet-scentedness, victorious strength, and freedom from sorrow, in which I appear to thee.

“13. When thou wouldst see a man making derision, and deeds of idolatry, or rejecting (the poor) and shutting his door, then thou wouldst sit singing the Gâthas and worshipping the good waters and Âtar, the son of Ahura Mazda, and rejoicing the faithful that would come from near or from afar.

“14. ‘I was lovely and thou madest me still lovelier; I was fair, and thou madest me still fairer; I was desirable and thou madest me still more desirable; I was sitting in a forward place and thou madest me sit in the foremost place, through this good thought, through this good speech, through this good deed of thine; and so henceforth men wor-

ship me for my having long sacrificed unto and conversed with Ahura Mazda.

“15. ‘The first step that the soul of the faithful man made, placed him in the Good-Thought Paradise;

“‘The second step that the soul of the faithful man made, placed him in the Good-Word Paradise;

“‘The third step that the soul of the faithful man made, placed him in the Good-Deed Paradise;

“‘The fourth step that the soul of the faithful man made, placed him in the Endless Lights.’

“16. Then one of the faithful, who had departed before him, asked him, saying: ‘How didst thou depart this life, thou holy man? How didst thou come, thou holy man! from the abodes full of cattle and full of the wishes and enjoyments of love? From the material world into the world of the spirit? From the decaying world into the undecaying one?’

“‘How long did thy felicity last?’

“17. And Ahura Mazda answered: ‘Ask him not what thou askest him, who has just

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gone the dreary way, full of fear and distress, where the body and the soul part from one another.

“18. ‘(Let him eat) of the food brought to him, of the oil of Zaremaya: this is the food for the youth of good thoughts, good words, good deeds, of good religion, after he has departed this life. This is the food for the holy woman, rich in good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, well principled and obedient to her husband, after she has departed this life.’

II.

“19. Zarathustra asked Ahura Mazda: ‘O Ahura Mazda, most beneficent Spirit, Maker of the material world, thou Holy One!’

“‘When one of the wicked perishes, where does his soul abide on that night?’

“20. Ahura Mazda answered: ‘It rushes and sits near the skull singing the Kima Gâtha, O holy Zarathustra!’

““‘To what land shall I turn, O Ahura Mazda? To whom shall I go with praying’”

“‘On that night his soul tastes as much

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of suffering as the whole of the living world can taste.'

"21. —'On the second night, where does his soul abide?'

"22. Ahura Mazda answered: 'It rushes and sits near the skull, singing the Kima Gâthat, O Holy Zarathustra: "To what land shall I turn, O Ahura Mazda? To whom shall I go with praying?"'

"'On that night his soul tastes as much of suffering as the whole of the living world can taste.'

"23. —'On the third night where does his soul abide?'

"24. Ahura Mazda answered: 'It rushes and sits near the skull, singing the Kima Gâtha, O Holy Zarathustra: "To what land shall I turn, O Ahura Mazda? To whom shall I go with praying?"'

"'On that night his soul tastes as much of suffering as the whole of the living world can taste.'

"25. At the end of the third night, O holy Zarathustra! when the dawn appears, it seems to the soul of the faithful one as if it were

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brought amidst snow and stench, and as if a wind were blowing from the region of the north, from the regions of the north, a foul-scented wind, the foulest-scented of all the winds in the world.

"26-32. And it seems to the soul of the wicked man, as if he were inhaling that wind with the nostrils, and he thinks: 'Whence does that wind blow, the foulest-scented wind that I ever inhaled with my nostrils?'

"33. The first step that the soul of the wicked man made laid him in the Evil-Thought Hell;

"The second step that the soul of the wicked man made laid him in the Evil-Word Hell;

"The third step that the soul of the wicked man made laid him in the Evil-Deed Hell;

"The fourth step that the soul of the wicked man made laid him in the Endless Darkness.

"34. Then one of the wicked who departed before him addressed him, saying: 'How didst thou perish, O wicked man? How didst thou come, O fiend! from the abodes full of cattle and full of the wishes and enjoyments

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of love? From the material world into the world of the Spirit? From the decaying world into the undecaying one? How long did thy suffering last?’

“35. Angra Mainyu, the lying one, said: ‘Ask him not what thou askest him, who has just gone the dreary way, full of fear and distress, where the body and the soul part from one another.

“36. ‘Let him eat of the food brought unto him, of poison and poisonous stench; this is the food, after he has perished, for the youth of evil thoughts, evil words, evil deeds, evil religion after he has perished; this is the food for the fiendish woman, rich in evil thoughts, evil words, and evil deeds, evil religion, ill-principled, and disobedient to her husband.’”

In the Avestic writings, we find much similarity to the Vedic pantheon of the Hindus. For instance, Ahura Mazda is no other than Asura Varuna of the monotheistic Vedic worshipers of ancient India. Varuna was the *Ouranus* of the Greeks. In the same manner it can be shown that the Zoroastrian

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Mithra (Greek Apollo) is the same as *Mithra*, the Sun God of the Vedas. The worship of Mithra has left a great impression upon early Christianity. Again the *Soma* of the Vedas is described as Haoma in the Avesta. We also notice that the Vedic rain-god Indra has become the demon Andra. The *Yama* of the Vedas is the same as Yima of the Avesta. The Saurva of the Avesta is the same as *Sarva* or *Siva* of the Vedas. In short, the language of the Avesta is closely related to the ancient Sanskrit of the Rig Veda.

The Zoroastrain Scriptures, which are called Zend-Avesta contain three parts: The first, Vendidâd, a compilation of religious laws and mythical tales of ancient times; the second, Visperad, a collection of litanies for sacrifices; and the third, Yasnas, which consist of litanies of the same kind, and of five Gâthâs or hymns. These Gâthâs were written in a more archaic dialect, older than the language of the Avesta. A great many of these books are lost.

Like the Pentateuch of Moses, the Avesta contains direct conversations between the

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prophet Zarathustra, and his God, Ahura Mazda. As the religion of Jehovah was revealed to Moses, so the religion of Ahura Mazda was revealed to Zarathustra. As in Genesis we read the Lord Yahveh created this world in six days, so in the Avesta it is said that Ahura Mazda created this world in six periods. Adam and Eve of the Avesta, are Mashya and Mashyana, the first man and woman created by Ahura Mazda. There is a deluge described in the Avesta, but with this difference from the Biblical story, that instead of Noah's Ark, an underground palace was built for the protection of all species.

Zoroastrianism teaches that Ahura Mazda, the one Supreme Lord of the universe, created man and gave him his body and mind. He nourishes and protects all. Man cannot do any good act alone by his will and intellect, without the grace of the Lord, for his will and intellect are bound to the infinite Will and infinite Intellect. He is compelled as a delegated spiritual power on earth to maintain the righteous order of the World, and therefore he is responsible for his

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thoughts and deeds. Through good thoughts and righteous deeds he will eventually approach his Creator and will receive heavenly glory and eternal happiness.

The following quotation from Zend-Avesta (*Vendidad*, Fargard XIX), will explain this more clearly:

"27 (89). O Maker of the material world, thou Holy One! Where are the rewards given? Where does the rewarding take place? Where is the rewarding fulfilled? Whereto do men come to take the reward that, during their life in the material world, they have won for their souls?

"28 (90). Ahura Mazda answered: 'When the man is dead, when his time is over, then the wicked, evil-doing Daêvas cut off his eyesight. On the third night, when the dawn appears and brightens up, when Mithra, the god with beautiful weapons, reaches the all-happy mountains, and the sun is rising:

"29 (94). Then the fiend, named Visaresha, O Spitama Zarathustra, carries off in bonds the souls of the wicked Daêva-worshippers who live in sin. The soul enters the way

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made by Time, and open both to the wicked and to the righteous. At the head of the Chinvad bridge, the holy bridge made by Mazda, they ask for their spirits and souls the reward for the worldly goods which they gave away here below.

"30 (98). Then comes the beautiful, well-shapen, strong and well-formed maid, with the dogs at her sides, one who can distinguish, who has many children, happy, and of high understanding.

"She makes the soul of the righteous one go up above the Haraberezaiti; above the Chinvad bridge, she places it in the presence of the heavenly gods themselves.

"31 (102). 'Up rises Vohu-manô from his golden seat; Vohu-manô exclaims: "How hast thou come to us, thou Holy One, from that decaying world into this undecaying one?"'

"32 (105). Gladly pass the souls of the righteous to the golden seat of Ahura Mazda, to the golden seat of the Amesha-Spentas, to the Garô-nmânem, the abode of Ahura Mazda, the abode of the Amesha-Spentas,

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the abode of all the other holy beings.

“33 (108). ‘As to the godly man that has been cleansed, the wicked evil-doing Daêvas tremble at the perfume of his soul after death, as doth a sheep on which a wolf is pouncing.

“34 (110). ‘The souls of the righteous are gathered together there: Nairyô-sangha is with them; a messenger of Ahura Mazda is Nairyô-sangha.’”

The Avesta tells us that the highest aim of our earthly life is to attain perfect happiness, which consists in the perfection of life, in the best or delightful thought, in the best or purest soul, and in the best or glorified body; secondly, it lies in the sight, conference and companionship of Ahura Mazda. The means for attaining this everlasting happiness that is given in this religion is *Asha* or holiness, which consists of two endeavors—to know God’s will, and to act in harmony with it. Therefore it is necessary for man to study the Scriptures, to observe the law, and to perform his duty to God, to his fellowman and to himself. This word *Asha* or holiness includes all the principles of

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morality. It was so strongly emphasized by Zarathustra that it occurs in almost every chapter of the Zend-Avesta. In fact Holiness is the soul of Zoroastrianism. It teaches that holiness is happiness, and that is the most valuable gift of Ahura Mazda and it is the best offering to be presented to the Lord by the righteous.

Zoroastrianism is a religion of absolute faith, implicit confidence and unswerving devotion to Ahura Mazda. It is like the Bhakti Yoga, or the path of devotion in the dualistic phase of the universal religion of Vedânta. It inculcates constant prayers, offerings, sacrifices and thanksgiving by the devotee to the Lord. Whatever a devotee wishes to attain, he must earnestly pray for to Ahura Mazda, who will grant his demands. Therefore it is right to ask for knowledge, grace, forgiveness, happiness and blessings. "I cry unto Thee, O Lord! behold my condition, I ask of Thee help and grace as a friend asks of his friend. Reveal unto me through righteousness, the Good Mind's wealth." "As Thou, O Ahura

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Mazda! hast thought, spoken, created and done everything good, therefore do we offer to Thee, therefore do we ascribe to Thee our praises, worship Thee and bow before Thee with confessions of our debt."

There are prayers to purge away sins by repentance: "Of all my sins I repent with a *Patet*. For all evil thoughts, words and actions, which are ill thought, ill spoken and ill done in this world . . .; for all sinful thoughts, sinful words and sinful deeds, for all bodily or earthly, mental or spiritual sins, I ask, O God, for forgiveness, and repent of them all with the three words."

Of all the Avestan prayers, *Ashem Vohū* and *Yathâ-Ahū-Vairyō*, are most important, and most frequently to be recited and often in quick succession. They are as follows:—"May Ahura Mazda be rejoiced!" *Ashem Vohū*. "Holiness is good; it is the best of all good. Holiness is happiness. Happiness is due to him who is best in holiness."

"I confess myself a worshipper of Mazda, a follower of Zarathustra, one who hates

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the Daêvas and obeys the Law of Ahura."

Yathâ-Ahû-Vairyo: "The will of the Lord is the law of holiness. As is the will of the Lord, the righteous person (is) in accordance with the Divine Order, an upholder of good-minded actions in this world for Mazda and (a supporter of) the Kingdom for Ahura (on earth) which offers help and protection to the poor."

Charity is one of the cardinal virtues of Zoroastrianism. Sins can be atoned for, or expiated by, charitable deeds. Kind treatment of animals is another virtue. The Avesta teaches: "Do not acquire the riches of the material world at the cost of the spiritual world. For he who destroys the spiritual world in order to obtain the riches of the material world shall possess neither the Celestial Light nor the Paradise of Ahura Mazda."

Zoroastrianism does not teach polygamy, but regards marriage as one of the most inviolable contracts. Children are considered as blessings and childlessness as a great curse, as a great punishment for having committed crimes. It upholds purity and cleanliness of

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the physical body, inculcates the sacredness of fire, water and earth, and describes purification ceremonies to purify these three elements of nature.

According to the teachings of the Avesta, all dead bodies of animals, as well as of human beings, are impure, and for this reason the Zoroastrians are forbidden to pollute these sacred elements by burying or burning the dead bodies, or by throwing them into the water. It teaches that it is sinful to burn or bury the dead, that the ground on which the dead matter lies is unfit for agriculture, that the ground of the grave is unclean and impure, and it does not become purified until fifty years have passed from the time when the corpse is buried. Therefore the injunction of the Avesta for the disposal of the dead body is that the corpse should be placed high up in the air that it may be devoured by beasts and birds, and that not a particle of it must fall in water, earth or fire and thus pollute them. At first they used to lay the corpse on the summit of a mountain upon stones, but now they build *Dakh-*

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mas or "Towers of Silence" for this purpose.

Zoroastrianism is not a system of philosophy, but a revealed religion of faith and devotion. It is not in harmony with modern science, which is based upon the theory of evolution, nor does it teach the reincarnation of souls. Ordinarily, it is called a religion of fire worship, but in reality it does not teach the worship of fire, nor does it advocate nature worship.

Sacred fire upon the altar in a temple is kept as a symbol which reminds the devotee of the glory of Ahura Mazda. It is regarded as the great purifier of all substances of nature and the giver of comfort. It is called *Ātar* in the Avesta. *Ātar* and *Asha* are most intimately connected with each other and for this reason a Zoroastrian invokes them together: "O Thou Spirit (God)! give us that joy and satisfaction through Thy *Ātar* and *Asha*." Like fire, Mithra (sun) is regarded as the representative of the Lord. The Avesta says that Ahura and Mithra should be invoked together since Ahura Mazda is full of light and there is no darkness in His Abode.

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As the Hindus of the Vedic age kept sacred fire in the temples, poured oblations in it and prayed to the Supreme Lord of the universe facing the blazing fire, the rising or setting sun, so the followers of Zarathustra having descended from the same Aryan stock, have preserved the custom of their ancient forefathers and have handed it down to the Parsees of modern India. Those who have been in Bombay have noticed how the Parsees, standing on the seashore, repeat their prayers, and bend their knees in reverence before the setting sun. A Zoroastrian is strictly enjoined to face a luminous object or a beautiful flower at the time of his devotional exercises.

HYMN FROM THE YASNA-ZEND-AVESTA.

“We worship the Spirit Divine,
All wisdom and goodness possessing,
Surrounded by Holy Immortals,
The givers of bounty and blessing,
We joy in the works of His hands,
His truth and His powers confessing.

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We praise all the things that are pure,
For these are His only Creation;
The thoughts that are true, and the words
And deeds that have won approbation;
These are supported by Him
And for these we make adoration.

Hear us, O Mazda! Thou livest
In truth and in heavenly gladness;
Cleanse us from falsehood, and keep us
From evil and bondage to badness;
Pour out the light and the joy of Thy life
On our darkness and sadness.

Shine on our gardens and fields,
Shine on our working and weaving;
Shine on the whole race of man,
Believing and unbelieving;
Shine on us now through the night,
Shine on us now in Thy might,
The flame of our holy love
And the song of our worship receiving."

The principal tenets of Zoroastrianism are summarized in the Catechism Mazdashna of

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the modern Parsees, thus: "What commands has God sent us through His prophet Zarathustra?"

"Many are those commands of which these are the principal ones:"

"To know God as one; to know the prophet, Zarathustra, as His true Prophet; to believe the religion and the Avesta brought by him, as true beyond all manner of doubt; to believe in the goodness of God; not to disobey any of the commands of the Mazdashna religion; to avoid all evil deeds; to exert for good deeds; to pray five times in the day; to believe in the reckoning and justice on the fourth morning after death; to hope for heaven and to fear hell; to consider doubtless the day of general destruction, and purification of all beings; to remember always that God has done what He willed, and shall do what He wills; to face some luminous object while worshipping God."

"What are those things by which man is blessed and benefited?"

"To do virtuous deeds, to give in charity, to be kind, to be humble, to speak sweet words,

to wish good to others, to have a clear heart, to acquire learning, to speak the truth, to suppress anger, to be patient and contented, to be friendly, to feel shame, to pay due respect to the old and young, to be pious, to respect our parents and teachers; all these are the friends of the good man and enemies of bad men."

Such are the teachings of Zoroaster, the great Prophet and Savior of Iran.



LÂO-TZE.

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LÂO-TZE AND HIS TEACHINGS.

Lão-Tze and His Teachings

THERE are three religions in China:—Confucianism, Tàoism, and Buddhism; or in other words, we may say that the religion of China inculcates the tenets of Confucianism, Tàoism, and Buddhism. For nearly two thousand years these three have existed in perfect harmony, moulding the social, political, moral and religious ideals of nearly four hundred millions of people. Confucianism and Tàoism are religions indigenous to the country, while Buddhism was introduced from India in the year 65 A. D. The founders of the former were Confucius and Lão-Tze, both of whom lived at the same time in the Sixth Century B. C. It is very remarkable to notice how the tremendous tidal wave of spirituality inundated the Asiatic Continent, revealing four great shining stars, the perfected souls on the

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highest crest of that spiritual wave:—one in Persia, Zoroaster, the great prophet of Iran, and the founder of Zoroastrianism; the second in India, Buddha, the great founder of Buddhism; while the third and fourth were in China. They all appeared almost simultaneously in the same spiritual cycle, brought divine wisdom with them and afterwards became the moral and spiritual leaders among different nations. Each of them helped mankind by distributing that wisdom, and by founding the religion which was suited to the peoples among whom they flourished.

The two Chinese prophets, Confucius and Lâo-Tze, are not regarded as saviors, like Krishna and Buddha, but are known as great sages and philosophers. The teacher of Tâoism was fifty-three years older than Confucius, but they met each other, and the substance of their conversation has been handed down to us by Chinese historians.

Unlike Confucianism, Christianity, Buddhism, or Mahometanism, the religion of Tâoism was not named after its founder, Lâo-Tze. He was born 604 B. C., in the third year of the

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reign of the Emperor Ting Wang, of the Cho Dynasty. We do not know the name of his parents. Tradition says, "The Master Lâu was conceived under the influence of a star. When he received the breath of life we cannot fathom, but once when asked, he pointed to the plum tree (in Chinese "Li"), under which he was born, and adopted it as his surname. We do not understand whence came the musical sounds that were heard, but he kept his marvellous powers concealed in the womb of his mother for more than seventy years. When he was born the hair of his head was already white, and he took the designation of Lâu-Tze (Old Boy)." These words were inscribed in 586 A. D. by the Emperor Wan Ti on the stone tablet in the temple built in memory of Lâu-Tze at his birth place, in the village of Chu-Jhren, Li County, belonging to the Ku province of the State Chu. It lies in the east of what is now the province of Honan. Besides this inscription on the stone tablet, we find a very brief account of Lâu-Tze's life in the famous historical records, or Shi-ki of Sze-ma-chien, the Hero-

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dotus of Chinese history. This Shi-Ki was completed in the year 91 B. C. We have still another short account of Lâu-Tze's life, by his renowned follower, Chwang-Tze, who lived in 330 B. C.

Both of these accounts say that the family name of this great Soul was Li (plum tree), and his name was Er (ear), but after his death he was called Tan, meaning (long lobed), long lobes being a sign of virtue. His appellation was Po Yang, or "Count of Positive Principle." He was popularly called Lâu-Tze (the Old Boy, or Philosopher), which signifies "One who remains childlike even when old." Lâu-Tze was one of the recorders at the Royal Court of Cho, and especially in charge of the secret archives, as State Historian.

In the year 517 B. C., Confucius (who was then about 35 years old), went to the library of Cho in order to consult Lâu-Tze on some ceremony regarding ancestor-worship. Referring to the ancestors, Lâu-Tze said to Confucius:

"The men about whom you talk are dead,

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and their bones are mouldered in dust; only their words are left. If a nobleman finds his time he rises, but if he does not find his time he drifts like a roving plant, and wanders about. I observe that the wise merchant hides his treasures deeply, and appears as if he is poor; and that the wise man, though his virtue be complete, assumes an attitude as though he were stupid. Put away your proud airs, your many desires, your affectation and wild plans. They are of no advantage to you, Sir. This is all I have to tell you, Sir."

Hearing this, Confucius left, and being unable to grasp Lâu-Tze's ideas, he said to his disciples: "I know how the birds can fly, fishes swim, and animals run; but the runner may be snared, the swimmer hooked, and the flyer shot by the arrow. But there is the Dragon—I cannot tell how he mounts on the wind through the clouds, and rises to heaven. To-day I have seen Lâu-Tze, and can only compare him to the Dragon."

The Historian also says that Lâu-Tze lived most of his life in Cho, cultivated the Tào

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and its attributes; and his chief aim was to keep himself concealed and unknown. But seeing the decay of the dynasty, he left Cho, and went away to the barrier gate leading out of the Kingdom on the Northwest frontier. There the custom house officer, Yin Hsi, said to Lâu-Tze, "Sir, you are about to retire, let me request you to compose a book for me." To fulfil his request, the old philosopher wrote a book in two parts, setting forth his views on Tào and its attributes, in more than five thousand Chinese characters. Then he departed; no one knows where he died.

This is the whole of the historical account of Lâu-Tze's life that we can get. Some European scholars, like Prof. Douglas, believe that Lâu-Tze was a descendant of the western nation of the Chinese Empire, which may have been in connection with India in ancient times. He also maintains that his peculiar long ear was the sign of his non-Chinese tribe, which inhabited the Western frontiers of old China. His surname, Li, indicates that perhaps Lâu-Tze descended

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from the important tribe of that name which was dispossessed by the invading Chinese, and was driven to seek refuge in Southwestern China. Furthermore, Prof. Douglas says: "However that may be, it is impossible to overlook the fact that he imported into his teachings a decided flavor of Indian philosophy." He goes so far as to say that Lâo-Tze's Tào resembles the Brahman of the Vedânta of pre-Buddhistic Indian Sages.

The teachings of Lâo-Tze are contained in the book which he wrote himself in the Sixth Century B. C., and which is known as Tào-Teh-King. This title was given by Emperor Ching, of the Han Dynasty, 156-143 B. C. He issued an imperial decree that Lâo-Tze's work on Tào and the Teh, which means the virtue or characteristics of Tào, should be respected as a canonical book or "King." Hence it is called Tào-Teh-King.

The term "Tào" has been a subject of great discussion among different European scholars. Some have translated it as "The Way"; others have called it "The Eternal Word or Logos"; others again "Eternal Being." Some called

it "Reason," others say it is the same as "Nature" of modern science. The Buddhists use the term "Tào" for enlightenment, and so on. It literally means "Path" or "Way" or "Method." As the word "Brahman" of Vedânta cannot be translated into English by one word, so there is no English term for "Tào."

Lão-Tze says Tào is One; it was in the Beginning, and it will remain for ever. It is eternal and immutable, it is omnipresent, bodiless, immaterial and imperceptible by the senses. It is nameless and indescribable. We look at it, and do not see it, and we name it the Equable; we listen to it, and do not hear it, and we name it the Inaudible; we try to grasp it and we do not get hold of it, and we name it the Subtle; with these three qualities it cannot be made subject of description, hence we blend them together, and obtain the One. It is called the mysterious abyss of existence. It is the mother of all phenomena, of heaven and earth, it existed before the personal God. It is the producer of God, just as in Vedânta, we know that Iswara,

or the personal God, is the first manifestation of Brahman.

Tão is impersonal, yet it is individualized in all living creatures, especially in man. As in Vedânta, Brahman, the Absolute being, when individualized, is called Jivâtman, so Tão, or The Way of Heaven, when individualized, is called the Tão, or Way of Man. The Way of Heaven, and the Way of Man are far apart, yet they are one in reality. Chwang-Tze says: "What is it that we call the Tão? There is the Tão, or Way of Heaven; and there is the Tão, or Way of Man. Doing nothing and yet attracting all honour is the Way of Heaven; doing, and being embarrassed thereby, is the Way of Man. It is the Way of Heaven that plays the part of the Lord; it is the Way of Man that plays the part of the Servant. The Way of Heaven and the Way of Man are far apart. They should be clearly distinguished from each other."*

Thus the student of Vedânta will be able to

*Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XXXIX, page 306.

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understand the Philosophy of Lâu-Tze more easily than the majority of European scholars who do not know Vedânta. Tâu is prior to God. Lâu-Tze says: "I do not know whose son it is. It might appear to have been before God."*

"I do not know its name, and I give it the designation of the Tâu (the Way or Course). Making an effort (further) to give it a name I call it The Great.

"Great, it passes on (in constant flow). Passing on, it becomes remote. Having become remote, it returns. Therefore The Tâu is great; Heaven is great; Earth is great; and the (sage) king is also great. In the Universe there are four that are great, and the (sage) king is one of them.

"Man takes his law from the Earth; the Earth takes its law from Heaven; Heaven takes its law from the Tâu. The law of the Tâu is its being what it is."†

"The Tâu that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging Tâu. The name

*Tâu-Teh-King, Ch. IV, Verse 3.

†Tâu-Teh-King, Ch. XXV, Verses 2, 3, 4.

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that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name."

"(Conceived of as) having no name, it is the Originator of Heaven and earth; (conceived of as) having a name, it is the Mother of all things."†

It is difficult for Christians to believe that there can be anything that is prior to God; or in other words, that which is God's Ancestor or Father. But according to Lâo-Tze, Tào is the Father of God. This idea we do not find in any other philosophy than Vedânta, which teaches that the Absolute Brahman, which is nameless, formless, incomprehensible and yet the source of all phenomena, like the Tào, is prior to *Iswara*, the personal God.

Again, Tào manifests itself in the Laws of Nature. Tào is not merely an abstract principle, it is the object of awe and reverence. In an interview with Confucius, Lâo-Tze spoke about Tào, as given in the texts of Tàoism:

"When Confucius was in his fifty-first year, he had not heard of the Tào, and went south to Phei to see Lâo Tan, who said to him,

†Tào-Teh-King, Ch. IV, Verses 1, 2.

'You have come, Sir; have you? I have heard that you are the wisest man of the North; have you also got the Tào?' 'Not yet,' was the reply; and the other went on, 'How have you sought it?' Confucius said, 'I sought it in measures and numbers, and after five years I had not got it.' 'And how then did you seek it?' 'I sought it in the Yin and Yang, and after twelve years I have not found it.' Lâu-Tze said, 'Just so! If the Tào could be presented (to another) men would all present it to their rulers; if it could be served up (to others) men would all serve it up to their parents; if it could be told (to others) men would all tell it to their brothers; if it could be given (to others) men would all give it to their sons and grandsons. The reason why it cannot be transmitted is no other but this—that if, within, there be not the presiding principle, it will not remain there, and if, outwardly, there be not the correct obedience, it will not be carried out. When that which is given out from the mind (in possession of it) is not received by the mind without, the sage will not give it out; and

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when, entering in from without, there is no power in the receiving mind to entertain it, the sage will not permit it to lie hid there. Fame is a possession common to all; we should not seek to have much of it. Benevolence and righteousness were as the lodging houses of the former kings; we should only rest in them for a night, and not occupy them for long. If men see us doing so, they will have much to say against us.

“The perfect men of old trod the path of benevolence as a path which they borrowed for the occasion, and dwelt in Righteousness as in a lodging which they used for a night. Thus they rambled in the vacancy of Untroubled Ease, found their food in the fields of Indifference, and stood in the gardens which they had not borrowed. Untroubled Ease requires the doing of nothing; Indifference is easily supplied with nourishment; not borrowing needs no outlay. The ancients called this the Enjoyment that Collects the True.

“Those who think that wealth is the proper thing for them cannot give up their revenues;

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those who seek distinction cannot give up the thought of fame; those who cleave to power cannot give the handle of it to others. While they hold their grasp of those things, they are afraid (of losing them). When they let them go, they are grieved, and they will not look at a single example, from which they might perceive the (folly) of their restless pursuits: such men are under the doom of Heaven.

“‘Hatred and kindness; taking and giving; reproof and instruction; death and life:—these eight things are instruments of rectification, but only those are able to use them who do not obstinately refuse to comply with their great changes. Hence it is said “Correction is Rectification.” When the minds of some do not acknowledge this, it is because the gate of Heaven (in them) has not been opened.’ ”*

Chwang-Tze, the follower of Lâo-Tze, says: “This is the Tâo; there is in It emotion and sincerity, but It does nothing and has

*Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XXXIX, pp. 354-357.

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no bodily form. It may be handed down (by the teacher) but may not be received (by his scholars). It may be apprehended (by the mind), but It cannot be seen. It has its root and ground (of existence) in Itself. Before there were heaven and earth, from of old, there it was securely existing. From It came the mysterious existences of spirits, from It the mysterious existence of God. It produced heaven; It produced earth. It was before the primordial ether.”*

Does this not remind one of similar passages of the Ancient Upanishads which describe the nature of Brahman?

Regarding Tào, Lâu-Tze himself says that Tào produces all things, and nourishes them, it produces them and does not claim them as its own; it does all yet it does not boast of it; it presides over all, and does not control them. That is what is called The Mysterious Quality of the Tào.

“All things are produced by the Tào, and nourished by its outflowing operation. They receive their forms according to the nature

*Ibid, p. 243.

of each, and are completed according to the circumstances of their condition. Therefore all things without exception honor the Tào, and exalt its outflowing operation.”*

As Brahman the Absolute is the cornerstone of the philosophy and religion of Vedânta, so Tào the Absolute and Eternal One is the fundamental principle of the philosophy and religion of Lâu-Tze. The word “God” (in Chinese “Ti”) is mentioned only once in Chapter IV, describing Him as posterior to Tào. Lâu-Tze never identified Tào with God as his later followers have done. Furthermore, there is a great similarity in the methods of realizing the Tào as given by Lâu-Tze, to those given in Vedânta, especially in Râja Yoga. Lâu-Tze speaks of what is called in Râja Yoga *Samâdhi*, in these words: “The excellence of mind is in Abysmal stillness.” He also speaks of purity, kindness towards all living creatures, contentment, self-control, and higher knowledge as the means for attaining the Tào. Concentration and breathing exercises are also considered to be

*Tào-Teh-King, Ch. LI, Verse 1.

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helpful in the path of Tào. Láo-Tze says: "When one gives undivided attention to the vital breath and brings it to the utmost degree of pliancy he can become as tender as a babe; when he has cleansed away the most mysterious sights (of his imagination) he can become without a flaw."

Again he says: "He (who knows the Tào) will keep his mouth shut, and close the portals (of his nostrils), (the gates of the senses). He will blunt his sharp points and unravel the complications of things; he will attemper his brightness, and bring himself into agreement with the obscurity (of others). This is called the 'Mysterious Agreement.'

"(Such an one) cannot be treated familiarly or distantly; he is beyond all consideration of profit or injury; of nobility or meanness; he is the noblest man under heaven."* Compare the above with the teachings of the Bhagavad Gitâ.

Chwang-Tze says: "What is meant by 'the True Man?' The true Men of old did not reject (the views of) the few; they did not seek

*Táo-Teh-King. Ch. LVI, Verses 2, 3.

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to accomplish (their ends) like heroes (before others) ; they did not lay plans to attain those ends. Being such, though they might make mistakes, they had no occasion for repentance ; though they might succeed, they had no self-complacency. Being such, they could ascend the loftiest heights without fear ; they could pass through water without being made wet by it ; they could go into fire without being burnt ; so it was that by their knowledge they ascended to and reached the Tâo.

“The True men of old did not dream when they slept, had no anxiety when they awoke, and did not care that their food should be pleasant. Their breathing came deep and silently. The breathing of the true man comes (even) from his heels, while men generally breathe (only) from their throats. When men are defeated in argument, their words come from their gullets as if they were vomiting. Where lusts and desires are deep, the springs of the Heavenly are shallow.

“The True men of old knew nothing of the love of life or of the hatred of death. Entrance into life occasioned them no joy ; the

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exit from it awakened no resistance. Composedly they went and came. They did not forget what their beginning had been, and they did not inquire into what their end would be. They accepted (their life) and rejoiced in it; they forgot (all fear of death) and returned (to their state before life). Thus there was in them what is called the want of any mind to resist the Tâo, and of all attempts by means of the Human to assist the Heavenly. Such were they who are called the True men.”*

When love and enmity, profit and loss, favor and disgrace do not affect the sage—he becomes world-honored. Does this not remind us of the sage described in the *Bhagavad Gitâ* by Krishna, in 1400 B. C?

Lâo-Tze, like Krishna, spoke of non-attachment to the works of the senses.

“The way of the Tâo,” says Lâo-Tze, “is to act without thinking of acting; to conduct affairs without feeling the trouble of them;

*Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XXXIX, pp. 237-238.

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to taste without discerning any flavor; to consider what is small as great, and a few as many; and to recompense injury with kindness."

Lão-Tze describes the heart of a holy man: "The holy man possesses not a fixed heart. The hundred families heart he makes his heart. He universalizes his heart and the hundred families fix upon him their eyes and ears. The holy man treats them as all his children. The holy man does not travel and yet he has knowledge. He does not see the things, and yet he defines them. He does not labor and yet he completes."

Lão-Tze taught self-restraint and renunciation. He says: "No greater sin than yielding to desire; no greater misery than discontent; no greater calamity than acquisitiveness."

As Christ said: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." So did Lão-Tze teach nearly 600 years before Christ, "Let the eternal Tào have its way, and otherwise be heedless of consequences, for all will be well."

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Virtue according to Lâo-Tze meant, "To imitate in all things Heaven's Tào."

Lâo-Tze taught the virtue of simplicity in habits, saying: "Abandon your scheming; put away your gains, and thieves and robbers will not exist.

Hold fast to that which will endure,
Show thyself simple, preserve thee pure,
Thine own keep small, thy desires poor."

He taught his disciples, "Renounce learnedness, and you have no vexation."

According to Lâo-Tze the holy man or sage is he who manages affairs without doing anything, and conveys his instructions without the use of speech: "The multitude of men look satisfied and pleased, as if enjoying a full banquet, as if mounted on a tower in spring. "I alone," says Lâo-Tze, "seem listless and still, my desires having as yet given no indication of their presence. I am like an infant which has not yet smiled."

Lâo-Tze believed not in artificial modes of government by making strict laws, not in war, but in allowing nature to take its own course. He says: "I will do nothing (with

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purpose), and the people will be transformed of themselves. I will be fond of keeping still, and the people will of themselves become correct. I will take no trouble about it, and the people will of themselves become rich; I will manifest no ambition, and the people will of themselves attain to the primitive simplicity."

Lão-Tze requests the government simply to administer, and not to govern. He does not believe in its interfering with the natural development of the people, but he urges everybody to practice non-acting, non-meddling, non-interference. His ideal was: "The less laws and prohibitions there are, the less crime will there be. The less welfare of the people is forced by artificial methods, the greater will be their wealth and prosperity."

Through this kind of non-action (or "Wu-Wei" in Chinese) everything can be accomplished. Philo, the Neo-Platonist, conceived of God as "Non-action." He called God the "Non-actor." By this he did not mean that God is passive, but that He is Absolute Existence. Indeed, God's activity does not mean exertion, as many people think, but

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it means "His Omnipresent Effectiveness."

Lão-Tze's philosophy exerted a strong influence on Tolstoi, who also regarded non-action as a virtue, while labor is not a virtue. Thus Lão-Tze's philosophy stands in strong contrast to the philosophy of Confucius. Confucius stood for good government, laws of propriety, good manners, but Lão-Tze did not believe in moralizing, but in natural spontaneity of the heart of the people, and independence. Confucius sought the favor of kings and princes, while Lão-Tze renounced them all. Confucius wanted to reform the external habits of life, but Lão-Tze wanted to reform the internal bent of the heart of the people.

"At an interview with Lão Tan, Confucius spoke to him of benevolence and righteousness. Lão Tan said: 'If you winnow chaff, and the dust gets into your eyes, then the places of heaven and earth and of the four cardinal points are all changed to you. If mosquitoes or gadflies puncture your skin, it will keep you all the night from sleeping. But this painful iteration of benevolence and righteousness excites my mind and produces in it

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the greatest confusion. If you, Sir, would cause men not to lose their natural simplicity, and if you would also imitate the wind in its (unconstrained) movements, and stand forth in all the natural attributes belonging to you! —“why must you use so much energy, and carry a great drum to seek for the son whom you have lost? The snow goose does not bathe every day to make itself white, nor the crow blacken itself every day to make itself black. The natural simplicity of their black and white does not afford any ground for controversy; and the fame and praise which men like to contemplate do not make them greater than they naturally are. When the springs (supplying the pools) are dried up, the fishes huddle together on the dry land. Than that they should moisten one another there by their gasping, and keep one another wet by their milt, it would be better for them to forget one another in the rivers and lakes.’ ”*

Confucius taught the Golden Rule for the first time in China in the Sixth Century B. C.,

*Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XXXIX, p. 357.

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although it was inculcated in India by the Vedic sages as well as by Krishna and other Saviors. [The Christians claim that Christ taught it for the first time, but the fact is that it was Rabbi Hillel (who died when Christ was ten years old), who preached it among the Jews for the first time.] Confucius, however, put the same idea in a negative form, "What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others." But Lâo-Tze, like Krishna and Buddha, went beyond this in the field of Ethics, by teaching, "Return good for evil." When Confucius was asked by one of his disciples regarding the truth of this teaching of Lâo-Tze, he replied: "What then will you return for good? Recompense injury with justice and return good for good." Hearing this Lâo-Tze said: "The good I meet with goodness, the bad I also meet with goodness, for virtue is good throughout."

"There are three precious things," says Lâo-Tze, which I prize and hold fast. The first is gentle compassion; the second is economy; the third is humility (not presuming to take precedence in the world). With gentle

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compassion I can be brave, with economy I can be liberal. Not presuming to claim precedence in the world, I can make myself a vessel fit for the most distinguished services." Indeed, Lâu-Tze was a great Yogi!

Thus we see that Lâu-Tze's philosophy inculcated the highest ethics, the purest method of living, and a grand discipline for mind and body. It had also the germ of a monistic religion, like that of Vedânta, although it was never developed in the same manner as it was in India.

The followers of Lâu-Tze retired from the world, lived in caves and forests like the Yogis of India and practised the virtues taught by their Master. The list of the Tâoist hermits in China is a very long one. They spent their lives in secluded retreats shut in by mountains, sheltered from the burning sun by the thick foliage of trees, striving to rise above love and hatred, pleasure and pain, and to attain the original purity and simplicity of Tâo. Even now there are to be found some Tâoist hermits in the caves of the Mount of a Hundred Flowers. Their arms are crossed against

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their breasts and their nails have grown so long that they curl around their necks. Some of them are over three hundred years old, according to the Tâoists of China.

Chwang-Tze, the renowned follower of Lâo-Tze, was a great sage. He realized Tâo, and interpreted the Master's ideas in his lucid and elegant style. He considered the world as a dream. He says: "How do I know that the love of life is not a delusion? And that the dislikes of death is not like a young person's losing his way, and not knowing that he is (really) going home? . . . Those who dream of (the pleasures of) drinking, may in the morning wail and weep; those who dream of wailing and weeping may in the morning be going out to hunt. When they were dreaming they did not know it was a dream; . . . but when they awoke they knew that it was a dream. And there is a great awaking, after which we shall know that this life was a great dream."*

*Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XXXIX, pp. 194-195.

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Does not this sound like the utterance of one who is a true Jnâna Yogi?

There is a very interesting story told of Chwang-Tze himself on his deathbed. At the last moment he requested his weeping relatives to leave his body uninterred. He said, "I will have heaven and earth for my sarcophagus, the sun and moon shall be the insignia where I lie in state, and all creation shall be mouners at my funeral." When his friends implored him to withdraw his request because the birds would mutilate his corpse, he smiled and said, "What matters that? Above are the birds of the air, below are the worms and ants; if you rob one to feed the other, what injustice is there done?"

Tâoism did not begin to be a popular religion until after the introduction of Buddhism in China. At that time the pure teachings of Lâo-Tze were mixed with all kinds of superstition, ancestor-worship, spirit-worship, pursuit of Alchemy, search after the pills of immortality, black magic and sorcery. These corruptions are still very predominant in modern Tâoism. Like the Delai Lâmâ of Tibet,

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and the Catholic Pope of Rome, Tâoism has its Pope, whose name is Chang, and who is commonly called Chang Tien Shih, or Chang, the Heavenly Teacher. He is the incarnation of the first Chang Tâo-Ling, or Pope, who lived in the First Century, A. D. He has a palace in the province of Kianghsi, where he has all the comforts and luxuries of an actual sovereign. He is a great exorcist, and wards off evil spirits, many of whom he has bottled up in big jars kept in long rows in the palace.

As in Buddhist temples in China, there are images of three precious ones, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha; so in modern Tâoism there are three pure or holy ones: the Perfect Holy One, the Highest Holy One, and the Greatest Holy One. The Perfect Holy One is the first. It represents something like God the Father, who presided over chaos at the beginning of the evolution of the world. Here we should remember that Tâoism does not believe in Creation, neither in a Creator, but in evolution, and Tâo is the starter of evolution, the transformer. The second of the Tâoist Trinity is called The Highest Holy

GREAT SAVIORS OF THE WORLD

One, who is the most High Prince, Lâu, the usual title of Lâu-Tze. The Third is the Greatest Holy One, or the great virtue of Lâu-Tze and his teaching.

Tâuism has borrowed from Buddhism this idea of Trinity as well as its form of worship, liturgies and temples with images which did not exist before the advent of Buddhism in China. Like Buddhism, Tâuism has its monks and nuns who wear yellow caps. Tâuism has also borrowed from Buddhism the idea of a Purgatory and of the reward and punishment after death, as also the idea of rebirth. But Lâu-Tze believed in the immortality of the soul and said : "He who dies and yet does not perish has longevity." He also advocated the theory of reincarnation or transformation of the soul after death. He never feared death, but called it a natural end of coming. The greatest of Lâu-Tze's appeals was for self-conquest. As in Vedânta, self-conquest is considered as the highest virtue, so Lâu-Tze says: "He who overcomes others is strong, but he who overcomes himself is mighty." According to Lâu-Tze the realiza-

LÃO-TZE AND HIS TEACHINGS

tion of Tào through self-conquest is the attainment of Salvation.

“The Heaven-honored One says: ‘Sincerity is the first step towards (the knowledge of) the Tào; it is by silence that that knowledge is maintained; it is with gentleness that (the Tào) is employed. The employment of sincerity looks like stupidity; the employment of silence looks like difficulty of utterance; the employment of gentleness looks like want of ability. But having attained to this, you may forget all bodily form; you may forget your personality; you may forget that you are forgetting. He who has taken the first steps towards (the knowledge of) the Tào knows where to stop; he who maintains the Tào in himself knows how to be diligently vigilant; he who employs It knows what is most subtle.

“‘When one knows what is most subtle, the light of intelligence grows (around him); when he can know how to be diligently vigilant, his sage wisdom becomes complete; when he knows where to stop, he is grandly composed and restful.

“‘When he is grandly composed and rest-

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ful, his sage wisdom becomes complete; when his sage wisdom becomes complete, the light of intelligence grows (around him); when the light of intelligence grows around him, he is one with the Tào.

“‘This is the condition which is styled the True Forgetfulness;—a forgetting which does not forget; a forgetting of what cannot be forgotten.

“‘That which cannot be forgotten is the True Tào. The Tào is in heaven and earth, but heaven and earth are not conscious of It. Whether It seem to have feelings or to be without them, It is (always) one and the same.’ ”*

*Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XL, pp. 266-267.

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